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THE EXPOSITOR'S BIBLE

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Editor of "The Expositor"

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THE

EPISTLES OF ST. JOHN.

TWENTY-ONE DISCOURSES,

With Greek Text, Comparative Versions, and Notes Chiefly Exegetical.

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PREFACE.

IT is now many years ago since I entered upon a study of the Epistles of St. John, as serious and prolonged as was consistent with the often distracting cares of an Irish Bishop. Such fruit as my labours produced enjoyed the advantage of appearing in the last volume of the *Speaker's Commentary* in 1881.

Since that period I have frequently turned again to these Epistles—subsequent reflection or study not seldom filling in gaps in my knowledge, or leading me to modify former interpretations. When invited last year to resume my old work, I therefore embraced willingly the opportunity which was presented to me.

Let me briefly state the method pursued in this book.

I. The First Part contains four Discourses.

(1) In the first Discourse I have tried to place the reader in the historical surroundings from which (unless all early Church history is unreal, a past that never was present) these Epistles emanated.

(2) In the second Discourse I compare the Epistle with the Gospel. This is the true point of orientation for the commentator. Call the connection between the two documents what we may; be the Epistle

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the Hieronymian interpretation precisely as it stood, not preface, appendix, moral and devotional commentary, or accompanying encyclical address to the Churches, which were "the nurslings of John"; that connection is constant and pervasive. Unless this principle is firmly grasped, we not only lose a defence and confirmation of the Gospel, but dissolve the whole consistency of the Epistle, and leave it floating—the thinnest cloud in the whole cloudland of mystic idealism.

(3) The third Discourse deals with the polemical element in these Epistles. Some commentators indeed, like the excellent Henry Hammond, "spy out Gnostics where there are none." They confuse us with uncouth names, and conjure up the ghosts of long-forgotten errors until we seem to hear a theological bedlam, or to see theological scarecrows. Yet Gnosticism, Doketism, Cerinthianism, certainly sprang from the teeming soil of Ephesian thought; and without a recognition of this fact, we shall never understand the Epistle. Undoubtedly, if the Apostle had addressed himself only to contemporary error, his great Epistle would have become completely obsolete for us. To subsequent ages an antiquated polemical treatise is like a fossil scorpion with a sting of stone. But a divinely taught polemic under transitory forms of error finds principles as lasting as human nature.

(4) The object of the fourth Discourse is to bring out the image of St. John's soul—the essentials of the spiritual life to be found in those precious chapters which still continue to be an element of the life of the Church.

Such a view, if at all accurate, will enable the reader to contemplate the whole of the Epistle with the sense of completeness, of remoteness, and of unity which arises from a general survey apart from particular difficulties. An ancient legend insisted that St. John exercised miraculous power in blending again into one the broken pieces of a precious stone. We may try in an humble way to bring these fragmentary particles of spiritual gem-dust together, and fuse them into one.

II. The plan pursued in the second part is this. The First Epistle (of which only I need now speak) is divided into ten sections.

The sections are thus arranged—

(1) The *text* is given in Greek. In this matter I make no pretence to original research; and have simply adopted Tischendorf's text, with occasional amendments from Dr. Scrivener or Prof. Westcott. At one time I might have been tempted to follow Lachmann; but experience taught me that he is "audacior quàm limatior," and I held my hand. The advantage to every studious reader of having the divine original close by him for comparison is too obvious to need a word more.

With the Greek I have placed in parallel columns the translations most useful for ordinary readers—the Latin, the English A.V. and R.V. The Latin text is that of the "Codex Amiatinus," after Tischendorf's splendid edition of 1854. In this the reader will find,

more than a hundred and twenty years after the death of St. Jerome, an interpretation more diligent and more accurate than that which is supplied by the ordinary Vulgate text. The saint felt "the peril of presuming to judge others where he himself would be judged by all; of changing the tongue of the old, and carrying back a world which was growing hoary to the initial essay of infancy." The Latin is of that form to which ancient Latin Church writers gave the name of "rusticitas." But it is a happy—I had almost said a divine—rusticity. In translating from the Hebrew of the Old Testament, St. Jerome has given a new life, a strange tenderness or awful cadence, to prophets and psalmists. The voice of the fields is the voice of Heaven also. The tongue of the people is for once the tongue of God. This Hebraistic Latin or Latinised Hebrew forms the strongest link in that mysterious yet most real spell wherewith the Latin of the Church enthrals the soul of the world. But to return to our immediate subject. The student can seldom go wrong by more than a hair's breadth when he has before him three such translations. In the first column stands St. Jerome's vigorous Latin. The second contains the English A.V., of which each clause seems to be guarded by the spirits of the holy dead, as well as by the love of the living Church; and to tell the innovator that he "does wrong to show it violence, being so majestical." The third column offers to view the scholarlike—if sometimes just a little pedantic and provoking—accuracy of the R.V. To this comparison

of versions I attach much significance. Every translation is an additional commentary, every good translation the best of commentaries.

I have ventured with much hesitation to add upon another column in each section a translation drawn up by myself for my own private use; the greater portion of which was made a year or two before the publication of the R.V. Its right to be here is this, that it affords the best key to my meaning in any place where the exposition may be imperfectly expressed.[1]

(2) One or more Discourses are attached to most of the sections. In these I may have seemed sometimes to have given myself a wide scope, but I have tried to make a sound and careful exegesis the basis of each. And I have throughout considered myself bound to draw out some great leading idea of St. John with conscientious care.

(2) The Discourses (or if there be no Discourse in

[1] I venture to call attention to the rendering "very." It enables the translator to mark the important distinction between two words: ἀληθής, *factually* true and real, as opposed to that which in point of fact is mendacious; ἀληθινός, *ideally* true and real, that which alone realizes the idea imperfectly expressed by something else. This is one of St. John's favourite words. In regard to ἀγάπη I have not had the courage of my convictions. The word "charity" seems to me almost providentially preserved for the rendering of that term. It is not without a purpose that ἔρως is so rigorously excluded from the New Testament. The objection that "charity" conveys to ordinary English people the notion of mere material alms is of little weight. If "charity" is sometimes a little *metallic*, is not "love" sometimes a little *maundering*? I agree with Canon Evans that the word, strictly speaking, should be always translated "charity" when alone, "love" when in regimen. Yet I have not been bold enough to put "God is charity" for "God is love."

the section, the text and versions) are followed by short notes, chiefly exegetical, in which I have not willingly passed by any real difficulty.

I have not wished to cumber my pages with constant quotations. But in former years I have read, in some cases with much care, the following commentators—St. Augustine's *Tractatus*, St. John Chrysostom's Homilies on the Gospel (full of hints upon the Epistles), Cornelius à Lapide; of older post-Reformation commentators, the excellent Henry Hammond, the eloquent Dean Hardy, the precious fragments in Pole's *Synopsis*—above all, the inimitable Bengel; of moderns, Düsterdieck, Huther, Ebrard, Neander; more recently, Professor Westcott, whose subtle and exquisite scholarship deserves the gratitude of every student of St. John. Of Haupt I know nothing, with the exception of an analysis of the Epistle, which is stamped with the highest praise of so refined and competent a judge as Archdeacon Farrar. But having read this list fairly in past years, I am now content to have before me nothing but a Greek Testament, the Grammars of Winer and Donaldson, the New Testament lexicons of Bretschneider, Grimm, and Mintert, with Tromm's "Concordantia LXX." For, on the whole, I really prefer St. John to his commentators. And I hope I am not ungrateful for help which I have received from them, when I say that I now seem to myself to understand him better without the dissonance of their many voices. "Johannem nisi ex Johanne ipso non intellexeris."

III. It only remains to commend this book, such as it is, not only to theological students, but to general readers, who I hope will not be alarmed by a few Greek words here and there.

I began my fuller study of St. John's Epistle in the noonday of life; I am closing it with the sunset in my eyes. I pray God to sanctify this poor attempt to the edification of souls, and the good of the Church. And I ask all who may find it useful, to offer their intercessions for a blessing upon the book, and upon its author.

WILLIAM DERRY AND RAPHOE.

THE PALACE, LONDONDERRY,
February 6th, 1889.

MERCIFUL GOD, we beseech Thee to cast Thy bright beams of light upon Thy Church, that it being enlightened by the doctrine of Thy blessed Apostle and Evangelist St. John, may so walk in the light of Thy truth, that it may at length attain to the light of everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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PART I.

"JOHANNIS EPISTOLÆ, ULTIMUSQUE PRIMÆ VERSICULUS, IN EPHESUM IMPRIMIS CONVENIUNT."

(BENGEL *in Act.* XIX. 21.)

DISCOURSE I.

THE SURROUNDINGS OF THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. JOHN.

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols."—1 JOHN v. 21.

AFTER the example of a writer of genius, preachers and essayists for the last forty years have constantly applied—or misapplied—some lines from one of the greatest of Christian poems. Dante writes of St. John—

> "As he, who looks intent,
> And strives with searching ken, how he may see
> The sun in his eclipse, and, through decline
> Of seeing, loseth power of sight: so I
> Gazed on that last resplendence."[1]

The poet meant to be understood of the Apostle's spiritual splendour of soul, of the absorption of his intellect and heart in his conception of the Person of Christ and of the dogma of the Holy Trinity. By these expositors of Dante the image is transferred to the style and structure of his writings. But confusion of thought is not magnificence, and mere obscurity is never sunlike. A blurred sphere and undecided outline is not characteristic of the sun even in eclipse. Dante never intended us to understand that St. John as a writer

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[1] Cary's *Dante, Paradiso*, xxv. 117. Stanley's *Sermons and Essays on the Apostolic Age*, 242.

was distinguished by a beautiful vagueness of sentiment, by bright but tremulously drawn lines of dogmatic creed. It is indeed certain that round St. John himself, at the time when he wrote, there were many minds affected by this vague mysticism. For them, beyond the scanty region of the known, there was a world of darkness whose shadows they desired to penetrate. For them this little island of life was surrounded by waters into whose depths they affected to gaze. They were drawn by a mystic attraction to things which they themselves called the "shadows," the "depths," the "silences." But for St. John these shadows were a negation of the message which he delivered that "God is light, and darkness in Him is none." These silences were the contradiction of the Word who has once for all interpreted God. These depths were "depths of Satan."[1] For the men who were thus enamoured of indefiniteness, of shifting sentiments and flexible creeds, were Gnostic heretics. Now St. John's style, as such, has not the artful variety, the perfect balance in the masses of composition, the finished logical cohesion of the Greek classical writers. Yet it can be loftily or pathetically impressive. It can touch the problems and processes of the moral and spiritual world with a pencil-tip of deathless light, or compress them into symbols which are solemnly or awfully picturesque.[2] Above all St. John has the faculty of enshrining dogma in forms of statement which are firm and precise—accurate enough to be envied by philosophers, subtle enough to defy the passage of heresy through their finely drawn yet powerful lines. Thus in the beginning of his Gospel

[1] Apoc. ii. 24. [2] John xiii. 30 cf. 1 John ii. 11.

all false thought upon the Person of Him who is the living theology of His Church is refuted by anticipation—that which in itself or in its certain consequences unhumanises or undeifies the God Man; that which denies the singularity of the One Person who was Incarnate, or the reality and entireness of the Manhood of Him who fixed His Tabernacle[1] of humanity in us.[2]

It is therefore a mistake to look upon the First Epistle of St. John as a creedless composite of miscellaneous sweetnesses, a disconnected rhapsody upon philanthropy. And it will be well to enter upon a serious perusal of it, with a conviction that it did not drop from the sky upon an unknown place, at an unknown time, with an unknown purpose. We can arrive at some definite conclusions as to the circumstances from which it arose, and the sphere in which it was written—at least if we are entitled to say that we have done so in the case of almost any other ancient document of the same nature.

Our simplest plan will be, in the first instance, to trace in the briefest outline the career of St. John after the Ascension of our Lord, so far as it can be followed certainly by Scripture, or with the highest probability from early Church history. We shall then be better

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[1] ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν.

[2] This characteristic of St. John's style is powerfully expressed by the great hymn-writer of the Latin Church.

"Hebet sensus exors styli;
Stylo scribit tam subtili,
Fide tam catholicâ,
Ne de Verbo salutari
Posset quicquam refragari
Pravitas hæretica."

Adam of St. Victor. Seq. xxxii.

able to estimate the degree in which the Epistle fits into the framework of local thought and circumstances in which we desire to place it.

Much of this biography can best be drawn out by tracing the contrast between St. John and St. Peter, which is conveyed with such subtle and exquisite beauty in the closing chapter of the fourth Gospel.

The contrast between the two Apostles is one of *history* and of *character*.

Historically the work done by each of them for the Church differs in a remarkable way from the other.

We might have anticipated for one so dear to our Lord a distinguished part in spreading the Gospel among the nations of the world. The tone of thought revealed in parts of his Gospel might even have seemed to indicate a remarkable aptitude for such a task. St. John's peculiar appreciation of the visit of the Greeks to Jesus, and his preservation of words which show such deep insight into Greek religious ideas, would apparently promise a great missionary, at least to men of lofty speculative thought.[1] But in the Acts of the Apostles St. John is first overshadowed, then effaced, by the heroes of the missionary epic, St. Peter and St. Paul. After the close of the Gospels he is mentioned five times only. Once his name occurs in a list of the Apostles.[2] Thrice he passes before us with Peter.[3] Once again (the first and last time when we hear of St. John in personal relation with St. Paul) he appears in the Epistle to the Galatians with two others, James and Cephas, as reputed to be pillars of the Church.[4] But whilst we read in the Acts of his taking a certain part in miracles, in preaching, in

[1] John xii. 20—34, especially ver. 24.
[2] Acts i. 13
[3] Acts iii. 4, v. 13, viii. 14.
[4] Gal. ii. 9.

confirmation; while his boldness is acknowledged by adversaries of the faith; not a line of his individual teaching is recorded. He walks in silence by the side of the Apostle who was more fitted to be a missionary pioneer.[1]

With the materials at our command, it is difficult to say how St. John was employed whilst the first great advance of the cross was in progress. We know for certain that he was at Jerusalem during the second visit of St. Paul. But there is no reason for conjecturing that he was in that city when it was visited by St. Paul on his last voyage[2] (A.D. 60); while we shall presently have occasion to show how markedly the Church tradition connects St. John with Ephesus.

We have next to point out that this contrast in the *history* of the Apostles is the result of a contrast in their *characters*. This contrast is brought out with a marvellous prophetic symbolism in the miraculous draught of fishes after the Resurrection.

First as regards St. Peter.

"When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him (for he was naked), and did cast himself into the sea."[3] His was the warm

[1] Acts iii. 4, iv. 13, viii. 14. The singular and interesting manuscript of Patmos (Αἱ *περίοδοι τοῦ θεολογοῦ*) attributed to St. John's disciple, Prochorus, seems to recognise that St. John's chief mission was not that of working miracles. Even in a kind of duel of prodigies between him and the sinister magician of Patmos, the following occurs. "Kynops asked a young man in the multitude where his father then was. 'My father is dead,' he replied, 'he went down yonder in a storm.' Turning to John, the magician said,— Come, bring up this young man's father from the dead.' 'I have not come here,' answered the Apostle, 'to raise the dead, but to deliver the living from their errors.'"

[2] Gal. ii. 9; Acts xxi. 17, *sqq.*

[3] John xxi. 7.

energy, the forward impulse of young life, the free bold plunge of an impetuous and chivalrous nature into the waters which are nations and peoples. *In* he *must; on* he *will.* The prophecy which follows the thrice renewed restitution of the fallen Apostle is as follows: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake He, signifying by what death He should glorify God, and when He had spoken this, He saith unto him, Follow Me."[1] This, we are told, is obscure; but it is obscure only as to details. To St. Peter it could have conveyed no other impression than that it foretold his martyrdom. "When thou wast young," points to the tract of years up to old age. It has been said that forty is the old age of youth, fifty the youth of old age. But our Lord does not actually define old age by any precise date. He takes what has occurred as a type of Peter's youthfulness of heart and frame—"girding himself," with rapid action, as he had done shortly before; "walking," as he had walked on the white beach of the lake in the early dawn; "whither thou wouldest," as when he had cried with impetuous half defiant independence, "I go a fishing," invited by the auguries of the morning, and of the water. The form of expression seems to indicate that Simon Peter was not to go far into the dark and frozen land; that he was to be growing old, rather than absolutely old.[2] Then should he stretch forth his hands, with the

[1] Ibid., vers. 17, 18, 19.

[2] The beginning of old age would account sufficiently for the anticipation of death in 2 Peter i. 13, 14, 15.

dignified resignation of one who yields manfully to that from which nature would willingly escape. "This spake He," adds the evangelist, "signifying by what death he shall glorify God."[1] What fatal temptation leads so many commentators to minimise such a prediction as this? If the prophecy were the product of a later hand added after the martyrdom of St. Peter, it certainly would have wanted its present inimitable impress of distance and reserve.

It is in the context of this passage that we read most fully and truly the contrast of our Apostle's nature with that of St. Peter. St. John, as Chrysostom has told us in deathless words, was loftier, saw more deeply, pierced right into and through spiritual truths,[2] was more the lover of Jesus than of Christ, as Peter was more the lover of Christ than of Jesus. Below the different work of the two men, and determining it, was this essential difference of nature, which they carried with them into the region of grace. St. John was not so much the great missionary with his sacred restlessness; not so much the oratorical expositor of prophecy with his pointed proofs of correspondence between prediction and fulfilment, and his passionate declamation driving in the conviction of guilt like a sting that pricked the conscience. He was the theologian; the quiet master of the secrets of the spiritual life; the calm strong controversialist who excludes error by constructing truth. The work of such a spirit as his was rather like the finest product of venerable and

[1] δοξάσει ver. 19. The lifelike *shall* (not *should*) is part of the many minute but vivid touches which make the whole of this scene so full of motion and reality—"I go a fishing" (ver. 3); "*about* two hundred cubits" (ver. 8); the accurate "beach" (ver. 4).

[2] διορατικώτερος. S. Joann. Chrysost.—*Hom. in Joann.*

long established Churches. One gentle word of Jesus sums up the biography of long years which apparently were without the crowded vicissitudes to which other Apostles were exposed. If the old Church history is true, St. John was either not called upon to die for Jesus, or escaped from that death by a miracle. That one word of the Lord was to become a sort of motto of St. John. It occurs some twenty-six times in the brief pages of these Epistles. "If I will that he abide"—abide in the bark, in the Church, in one spot, in life, in spiritual communion with Me. It is to be remembered finally, that not only spiritual, but ecclesiastical consolidation is attributed to St. John by the voice of history. He occupied himself with the visitation of his Churches and the development of Episcopacy. So in the sunset of the Apostolic age stands before us the mitred form of John the Divine. Early Christianity had three successive capitals—Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus. Surely, so long as St. John lived, men looked for a Primate of Christendom not at Rome but at Ephesus.

How different were the two deaths! It was as if in His words our Lord allowed His two Apostles to look into a magic glass, wherein one saw dimly the hurrying feet, the prelude to execution which even the saint wills not; the other the calm life, the gathered disciples, the quiet sinking to rest. In the clear obscure of that prophecy we may discern the outline of Peter's cross, the bowed figure of the saintly old man. Let us be thankful that John "*tarried.*" He has left the Church three pictures that can never fade —in the Gospel the picture of Christ, in the Epistles the picture of his own soul, in the Apocalypse the picture of Heaven.

So far we have relied almost exclusively upon indications supplied by Scripture. We now turn to Church history to fill in some particulars of interest.

Ancient tradition unhesitatingly believed that the latter years of St. John's prolonged life, were spent in the city of Ephesus, or province of Asia Minor, with the Virgin-Mother, the sacred legacy from the cross, under his fostering care for a longer or shorter portion of those years. Manifestly he would not have gone to Ephesus during the lifetime of St. Paul. Various circumstances point to the period of his abode there as beginning a little after the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 67). He lived on until towards the close of the first century of the Christian era, possibly two years later (A.D. 102) With the date of the Apocalypse we are not directly concerned, though we refer it to a very late period in St. John's career, believing that the Apostle did not return from Patmos until just after Domitian's death. The date of the Gospel may be placed between A.D. 80 and 90 And the First Epistle accompanied the Gospel, as we shall see in a subsequent discourse.

The Epistle then, like the Gospel, and contemporaneously with it, saw the light in Ephesus, or in its vicinity. This is proved by three pieces of evidence of the most unquestionable solidity.

(1) The opening chapters of the Apocalypse contain an argument, which cannot be explained away for the connection of St. John with Asia Minor and with Ephesus. And the argument is independent of the authorship of that wonderful book. *Whoever* wrote the Book of the Revelation must have felt the most absolute conviction of St. John's abode in Ephesus and temporary exile to Patmos. To have written with a special view of acquiring a hold upon the Churches

of Asia Minor, while assuming from the very first as *fact* what *they*, more than any other Churches in the world, must have known to be *fiction*, would have been to invite immediate and contemptuous rejection. The three earliest chapters of the Revelation are unintelligible, except as the real or assumed utterance of a Primate (in later language) of the Churches of Asia Minor. To the inhabitants of the barren and remote isle of Patmos, Rome and Ephesus almost represented the world; their rocky nest among the waters was scarcely visited except as a brief resting-place for those who sailed from one of those great cities to the other, or for occasional traders from Corinth.

(2) The second evidence is the fragment of the Epistle of Irenæus to Florinus preserved in the fifth book of the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius. Irenæus mentions no dim tradition, appeals to no past which was never present. He has but to question his own recollections of Polycarp, whom he remembered in early life. "Where he sat to talk, his way, his manner of life, his personal appearance, how he used to tell of his intimacy with John, and with the others who had seen the Lord."[1] Irenæus elsewhere distinctly says that "John himself issued the Gospel while living at Ephesus in Asia Minor, and that he survived in that city until Trajan's time."[2]

(3) The third great historical evidence which connects St. John with Ephesus is that of Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, who wrote a synodical epistle to Victor and the Roman Church on the quartodeciman question, toward the close of the second century. Polycrates speaks of the great ashes which sleep in

[1] *Ap. Euseb. H. E.*, v. 20. [2] *Adv. Hæres.*, lib. iii., ch. 1.

Asia Minor until the Advent of the Lord, when He shall raise up His saints. He proceeds to mention Philip who sleeps in Hierapolis; two of his daughters; a third who takes her rest in Ephesus, and "John moreover, who leaned upon the breast of Jesus, who was a high priest bearing the radiant plate of gold upon his forehead."[1]

This threefold evidence would seem to render the sojourn of St. John at Ephesus for many years one of the most solidly attested facts of earlier Church history.

It will be necessary for our purpose to sketch the general condition of Ephesus in St. John's time.

A traveller coming from Antioch of Pisidia (as St. Paul did A.D. 54) descended from the mountain chain which separates the Meander from the Cayster. He passed down by a narrow ravine to the "Asian meadow" celebrated by Homer. There, rising from the valley, partly running up the slope of Mount Coressus, and again higher along the shoulder of Mount Prion, the traveller saw the great city of Ephesus towering upon the hills, with widely scattered suburbs. In the first century the population was immense, and included a strange mixture of races and religions. Large numbers of Jews were settled there, and seem to have possessed a full religious organisation under a High Priest or Chief Rabbi. But the prevailing super-

[1] *ἱερεὺς τὸ πέταλον πεφορεκώς*—"Pontifex ejus (sc. *Domini*) auream laminam in fronte habens." So translated by S. Hieron. *Lib. de Vir. Illust.*, xlv. The *πέταλον* is the LXX. rendering of צִיץ, the projecting leaf or plate of radiant gold (Exod. xxviii. 26, xxxix. 30), associated with the "mitre" (Lev. viii. 9). Whether Polycrates speaks literally, or wishes to convey by a metaphor the impression of holiness radiating from St. John's face, we probably cannot decide

stition was the worship of the Ephesian Artemis. The great temple, the priesthood whose chief seems to have enjoyed a royal or quasi-royal rank, the affluence of pilgrims at certain seasons of the year, the industries connected with objects of devotion, supported a swarm of devotees, whose fanaticism was intensified by their material interest in a vast religious establishment. Ephesus boasted of being a theocratic city, the possessor and keeper of a temple glorified by art as well as by devotion. It had a civic calendar marked by a round of splendid festivities associated with the cultus of the goddess. Yet the moral reputation of the city stood at the lowest point, even in the estimation of Greeks. The Greek character was effeminated in Ionia by Asiatic manners, and Ephesus was the most dissolute city of Ionia. Its once superb schools of art became infected by the ostentatious vulgarity of an ever-increasing parvenu opulence. The place was chiefly divided between dissipation and a degrading form of literature. Dancing and music were heard day and night; a protracted revel was visible in the streets. Lascivious romances whose infamy was proverbial were largely sold and passed from hand to hand. Yet there were not a few of a different character. In that divine climate, the very lassitude, which was the reaction from excessive amusement and perpetual sunshine, disposed many minds to seek for refuge in the shadows of a visionary world. Some who had received or inherited Christianity from Aquila and Priscilla, or from St. Paul himself, thirty or forty years before, had contaminated the purity of the faith with inferior elements derived from the contagion of local heresy, or from the infiltration of pagan thought. The Ionian intellect seems to have delighted in imaginative metaphysics; and for

minds undisciplined by true logic or the training of severe science imaginative metaphysics is a dangerous form of mental recreation. The adept becomes the slave of his own formulæ, and drifts into partial insanity by a process which seems to himself to be one of indisputable reasoning. Other influences outside Christianity ran in the same direction. Amulets were bought by trembling believers. Astrological calculations were received with the irresistible fascination of terror. Systems of magic, incantations, forms of exorcism, traditions of theosophy, communications with demons—all that we should now sum up under the head of spiritualism—laid their spell upon thousands. No Christian reader of the nineteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles will be inclined to doubt that beneath all this mass of superstition and imposture there lay some dark reality of evil power. At all events the extent of these practices, these "curious arts" in Ephesus at the time of St. Paul's visit, is clearly proved by the extent of the local literature which spiritualism put forth. The value of the books of magic which were burned by penitents of this class, is estimated by St. Luke at fifty thousand pieces of silver—probably about thirteen hundred and fifty pounds of our money![1]

Let us now consider what ideas or allusions in the Epistles of St. John coincide with, and fit into, this Ephesian contexture of life and thought.

We shall have occasion in the third discourse to refer to forms of Christian heresy or of semi-Christian

[1] Acts xix. 20, 21. In this description of Ephesus the writer has constantly had in view the passages to which he referred in the *Speaker's Commentary, N.T.*, iv., 274, 276. He has also studied M. Renan's *Saint Paul*, chap. xii., and the authorities cited in the notes, pp. 329, 350.

speculation indisputably pointed to by St. John, and prevalent in Asia Minor when the Apostle wrote. But besides this, several other points of contact with Ephesus can be detected in the Epistles before us. (1) The first Epistle closes with a sharp decisive warning, expressed in a form which could only have been employed when those who were addressed habitually lived in an atmosphere saturated with idolatry, where the social temptations to come to terms with idolatrous practices were powerful and ubiquitous. This was no doubt true of many other places at the time, but it was pre-eminently true of Ephesus. Certain of the Gnostic Christian sects in Ionia held lax views about "eating things sacrificed unto idols," although fornication was a general accompaniment of such a compliance. Two of the angels of the Seven Churches of Asia within the Ephesian group —the angels of Pergamum and of Thyatira—receive especial admonition from the Lord upon this subject. These considerations prove that the command, "Children, guard yourselves from the idols," had a very special suitability to the conditions of life in Ephesus. (2) The population of Ephesus was of a very composite kind. Many were attracted to the capital of Ionia by its reputation as the capital of the pleasures of the world. It was also the centre of an enormous trade by land and sea. Ephesus, Alexandria, Antioch and Corinth were the four cities where at that period all races and all religions of civilised men were most largely represented. Now the First Epistle of St. John has a peculiar breadth in its representation of the purposes of God. Christ is not merely the fulfilment of the hopes of one particular people. The Church is not merely destined to be the home of a handful of spiritual citizens. The Atonement is as wide as the race of man. "He is the propitiation

for the whole world;" "we have seen, and bear witness that the Father sent the Son as Saviour of the world."[1] A cosmopolitan population is addressed in a cosmopolitan epistle. (3) We have seen that the gaiety and sunshine of Ephesus was sometimes darkened by the shadows of a world of magic, that for some natures Ionia was a land haunted by spiritual terrors. He must be a hasty student who fails to connect the extraordinary narrative in the nineteenth chapter of the Acts with the ample and awful recognition in the Epistle to the Ephesians of the mysterous conflict in the Christian life against evil intelligences, real, though unseen.[2] The brilliant rationalist may dispose of such things by the convenient and compendious method of a sneer. "Such narratives as that" (of St. Paul's struggle with the exorcists at Ephesus) "are disagreeable little spots in everything that is done by the people. Though we cannot do a thousandth part of what St. Paul did, we have a system of physiology and of medicine very superior to his."[3] Perhaps *he* had a system of spiritual diagnosis very superior to ours. In the epistle to the Angel of the Church of Thyatira, mention is made of "the woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess,"[4] who led astray the servants of Christ. St. John surely addresses himself to a community where influences precisely of this kind exist, and are recognised when he writes,—"Beloved, believe

[1] St. John ii. 2, iv. 14.

[2] "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against," etc. Eph. vi. 12-17.

[3] *Saint Paul*, Renan, 318, 319.

[4] For the almost certain reference here to the Chaldean Sybil Sambethe, see Apoc. ii. 20, Archdeacon Lee's note in *Speaker's Commentary, N.T.*, iv. 527, 534, 535, and Dean Blakesley (art. *Thyatira, Dict. of the Bible*).

not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. . . . Every spirit that confesseth not Jesus is not of God."[1] The Church or Churches, which the First Epistle directly contemplates, did not consist of men just converted. Its whole language supposes Christians, some of whom had grown old and were "fathers" in the faith, while others who were younger enjoyed the privilege of having been born and brought up in a Christian atmosphere. They are reminded again and again, with a reiteration which would be unaccountable if it had no special significance, that the commandment "that which they heard," "the word," "the message," is the same which they had from the *beginning*."[2] Now this will exactly suit the circumstances of a Church like the Ephesian, to which another Apostle had originally preached the Gospel many years before.[3]

[1] 1 John iv. 1, 3.

[2] 1 John ii. 7, ii. 24, iii. 11; 2 John v. 5, 6. The passage in ii. 24 is a specimen of that simple emphasis, that presentation of a truth or duty under two aspects, which St. John often produces merely by an inversion of the order of the words. "Ye—what ye *heard* from the beginning let it abide in you. If what from the *beginning* ye heard abide in you" (ὃ ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς . . . ὃ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ἠκούσατε). The emphasis in the first clause is upon the *fact* of their having *heard* the message; in the second upon this feature of the message—that it was given in the *beginning* of Christianity amongst them, and kept unchanged until the present time.

[3] Acts xviii. 18-21. To these general links connecting our Epistles with Ephesus, a few of less importance, yet not without significance, may be added. The name of Demetrius (3 John 12) is certainly suggestive of the holy city of the earth-mother (Acts xix. 24, 38). Vitruvius assigns the completion of the temple of Ephesus to an architect of the name, and calls him "servus Dianæ." St. John in his Gospel adopts, as if instinctively, the computation of time which was used in Asia Minor (John iv. 6, xix. 4—Hefel. *Martyrium S. Polycarp.*

On the whole, we have in favour of assigning these Epistles to Ionian and Ephesian surroundings a considerable amount of external evidence. The general characteristics of the First Epistle consonant with the view of their origin which we have advocated are briefly these. (1) It is addressed to readers who were encompassed by peculiar temptations to make a compromise with idolatry. (2) It has an amplitude and generality of tone which befitted one who wrote to a Church which embraced members from many countries, and was thus in contact with men of many races and religions. (3) It has a peculiar solemnity of reference to the invisible world of spiritual evil and to its terrible influence upon the human mind. (4) The Epistle is pervaded by a desire to have it recognised that the creed and law of practice which it asserts is absolutely one with that which had been proclaimed by earlier heralds of the cross to the same community. Every one of these characteristics is consistent with the destination of the Epistle for the Christians of Ephesus in the first instance. Its polemical element, which we are presently to discuss, adds to an accumula-

xxi.). On the same principle he speaks in the Apocalypse of "day and night" (Apoc. iv. 8, vii. 15, xii. 10, xiv. 11, xx. 10); St. Paul, on the other hand, speaks of "night and day" (1 Tim. v. 5). It is a very real indication of the accuracy of the report of words in the Acts that, while St. Luke himself uses either form indifferently (Luke ii. 37, xviii. 2), St. Paul, as quoted by him, always says "night and day" (Acts xx. 31, xxvi. 7). Is it merely fanciful to conjecture that the unusual *ἀγαθοποιῶν* (3 John 11) may be an allusion to the astrological language in which alone the term is ever used outside a very few instances in the sacred writers? "He only is under a good star, and has beneficent omens for his life." Balbillus, one of the most famous astrologers of antiquity, the confidant of Nero and Vespasian, was an Ephesian, and almost supreme in Ephesus, not long before St. John's arrival there. Sueton., *Neron.*, 36.

tion of coincidences which no ingenuity can volatilise away. The Epistle meets Ephesian circumstances; it also strikes at Ionian heresies.

Aïa-so-Louk,[1] the modern name of Ephesus, appears to be derived from two Greek words which speak of St. John the divine, the theologian of the Church. As the memory of the Apostle haunts the city where he so long lived, even in its fall and long decay under its Turkish conquerors,—and the fatal spread of the malaria from the marshes of the Cayster—so a memory of the place seems to rest in turn upon the Epistle, and we read it more satisfactorily while we assign to it the origin attributed to it by Christian antiquity, and keep that memory before our minds.

[1] Aïa-so-Louk, a corruption of ἅγιος θεόλογος, *holy theologian* (or ἁγία θεολόγου, *holy city of the theologian*). Some scholars, however, assert that the word is often pronounced and written *aiaslyk*, with the common Turkish termination *lyk*. See *S. Paul* (Renan, 342, note 2).

DISCOURSE II.

THE CONNECTION OF THE EPISTLE WITH THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN.

Συνάδυσι μὲν γὰρ ἀλλήλοις τὸ εὐαγγέλιον καὶ ἡ ἐπιστολή.
Dionys. Alexandr. ap Euseb., H. E., vii., 25.

"And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."
—1 JOHN i. 4.

FROM the wholesale burning of books at Ephesus, as a consequence of awakened convictions, the most pregnant of all commentators upon the New Testament has drawn a powerful lesson. "True religion," says the writer, "puts bad books out of the way." Ephesus at great expense burnt curious and evil volumes, and the "word of God grew and prevailed." And he proceeds to show how just in the very matter where Ephesus had manifested such costly penitence, she was rewarded by being made a sort of depository of the most precious books which ever came from human pens. St. Paul addresses a letter to the Ephesians. Timothy was Bishop of Ephesus when the two great pastoral Epistles were sent to him.[1] All St. John's writings point to the same place. The Gospel and Epistles

[1] Bengel, on Acts xix. 19, 20, finds a reference to manuscripts of some of the synoptical Gospels and of the Epistles in 2 Tim. iv. 13, and conjectures that, after St. Paul's martyrdom, Timothy carried them with him to Ephesus.

were written there, or with primary reference to the capital of Ionia.[1] The Apocalypse was in all probability first read at Ephesus.

Of this group of Ephesian books we select two of primary importance—the Gospel and First Epistle of St. John. Let us dwell upon the close and thorough connection of the two documents, upon the interpretation of the Epistle by the Gospel, by whatever name we may prefer to designate the connection.

It is said indeed by a very high authority, that while the "whole Epistle is permeated with thoughts of the person and work of Christ," yet "direct references to facts of the Gospel are singularly rare." More particularly it is stated that "we find here none of the foundation and (so to speak) crucial events summarised in the earliest Christian confession as we still find them in the Apostle's creed." And among these events are placed, "the Birth of the Virgin Mary, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Session, the Coming to Judgment."

To us there seems to be some exaggeration in this way of putting the matter. A writing which accompanied a sacred history, and which was a spiritual comment upon that very history, was not likely to repeat the history upon which it commented, just in the same shape. Surely the Birth is the necessary condition of having come in the flesh. The incident of the piercing of the side, and the water and blood

[1] Renan's curious theory that Rom. xvi. 1-16 is a sheet of the Epistle to the Ephesians accidentally misplaced, rests upon a supposed prevalence of Ephesian names in the case of those who are greeted. Archdeacon Gifford's refutation, and his solution of an unquestionable difficulty, seems entirely satisfactory. (*Speaker's Commentary, in loc.*, vol. iii., New Testament.)

which flowed from it, is distinctly spoken of; and in that the Crucifixion is implied. Shrinking with shame from Jesus at His Coming, which is spoken of in another verse, has no meaning unless that Coming be to Judgment.[1] The sixth chapter is, if we may so say, the section of "the Blood," in the fourth Gospel. That section standing in the Gospel, standing in the great Sacrament of the Church, standing in the perpetually cleansing and purifying efficacy of the Atonement—ever present as a witness, which becomes personal, because identified with a Living Personality[2]—finds its echo and counterpart in the Epistle towards the beginning and near the close.[3]

We now turn to that which is the most conclusive evidence of connection between two documents—one historical, the other moral and spiritual—of which literary composition is capable. Let us suppose that a writer of profound thoughtfulness has finished, after long elaboration, the historical record of an eventful and many-sided life—a life of supreme importance to a nation, or to the general thought and progress of humanity. The book is sent to the representatives of some community or school. The ideas which its subject has uttered to the world, from their breadth and from the occasional obscurity of expression incident to

[1] It has become usual to say that the Epistle does not advert to John iii. or John vi. To us it seems that *every* mention of the Birth of God *is* a reference to John iii. (1 John ii. 23, iii. 9, iv. 7, v. 1-4.) The word *αἷμα* occurs *once* only in the fourth Gospel outside the sixth chapter (xix. 34; for i. 13 belongs to physiology). Four times we find it in that chapter—vi. 53, 54, 55, 56. Each mention of the "Blood" in connection with our Lord *does* advert to John vi.

[2] The masc. part. *οἱ μαρτυροῦντες* is surely very remarkable with the three neuters (*τὸ πνεῦμα, τὸ ὕδωρ, τὸ αἷμα*) 1 John v. 7, 8.

[3] 1 John i. 7, v. 6, 8.

all great spiritual utterances, need some elucidation. The plan is really exhaustive, and combines the facts of the life with a full insight into their relations; but it may easily be missed by any but thoughtful readers. The author will accompany this main work by something which in modern language we might call an introduction, or appendix, or advertisement, or explanatory pamphlet, or encyclical letter. Now the ancient form of literary composition rendered books packed with thought doubly difficult both to read and write; for they did not admit foot-notes, or marginal analyses, or abstracts. St. John then practically says, first to his readers in Asia Minor, then to the Church for ever—"with this life of Jesus I send you not only thoughts for your spiritual benefit, moulded round His teaching, but something more; I send you an *abstract*, a compendium of contents, at the beginning of this letter; I also send you at its close a key to the plan on which my Gospel is conceived." And surely a careful reader of the Gospel at its first publication would have desired assistance exactly of this nature. He would have wished to have a synopsis of contents, short but comprehensive, and a synoptical view of the author's plan—of the idea which guided him in his choice of incidents so momentous and of teaching so varied.

We have in the First Epistle two synopses of the Gospel which correspond with a perfect precision to these claims.[1] We have: (1) a synopsis of the *contents* of the Gospel; (2) a synoptical view of the *conception* from which it was written.

1. We find in the Epistle at the very outset a synopsis of the contents of the Gospel.

[1] See note A. at the end of this Discourse, which shows that there are, in truth, *four* such summaries.

"That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we gazed upon, and our hands handled—*I speak* concerning the Word who is the Life—that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you also."

What are the contents of the Gospel? (1) A lofty and dogmatic *proœmium*, which tells us of "the Word who was in the beginning with God—in Whom was life." (2) *Discourses* and utterances, sometimes running on through pages, sometimes brief and broken. (3) *Works*, sometimes miraculous, sometimes wrought into the common contexture of human life—looks, influences, seen by the very eyes of St. John and others, gazed upon with ever deepening joy and wonder. (4) *Incidents* which proved that all this issued from One who was intensely human; that it was as real as life and humanity—historical not visionary; the doing and the effluence of a Manhood which could be, and which was, grasped by human hands.

Such is a synopsis of the Gospel precisely as it is given in the beginning of the First Epistle. (1) The Epistle mentions *first*, "that which was from the beginning." There is the compendium of the proœmium of the Gospel. (2) One of the most important constituent parts of the Gospel is to be found in its ample preservation of dialogues, in which the Saviour is one interlocutor; of monologues spoken to the hushed hearts of the disciples, or to the listening Heart of the Father, yet not in tones so low that their love did not find it audible. This element of the narrative is summed up by the writer of the Epistle in two words—"That which we heard."[1] (3) The *works* of bene-

[1] ὃ ἀκηκόαμεν.

volence or power, the doings and sufferings; the pathos or joy which spring up from them in the souls of the disciples, occupy a large portion of the Gospel. All these come under the heading, "that which we have seen with our eyes,[1] that which we gazed upon,"[2] with one unbroken gaze of wonder as so beautiful, and of awe as so divine.[3] (4) The assertion of the *reality of the Manhood*[4] of Him who was yet the Life manifested—a reality through all His words, works, sufferings—finds its strong, bold summary in this compendium of the contents of the Gospel, "and our hands have handled." Nay, a still shorter compendium follows: (1) The Life with the Father. (2) The Life manifested.[5]

2. But we have more than a synopsis which embraces the contents of the Gospel at the beginning of the

[1] ὃ ἑωράκαμεν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν.

[2] John xx. 20.

[3] ὃ ἐθεασάμεθα, 1 John i. 1. The same word is used in John i. 14.

[4] John xix. 27 would express this in the most palpable form. But it is constantly understood through the Gospel. The tenacity of Doketic error is evident from the fact that Chrysostom, preaching at Antioch, speaks of it as a popular error in his day. A little later, orthodox ears were somewhat offended by some beautiful lines of a Greek sacred poet, too little known among us, who combines in a singular degree Roman gravity with Greek grace. St. Romanus (A.D. 491) represents our Lord as saying of the sinful woman who became a penitent

τὴν βρέξασαν ἴχνη
ἃ οὐκ ἔβρεξε βυθὸς
ψιλοῖς τότε τοῖς δάκρυσιν.

"Which with her tears, then pure,
Wetted the feet the sea-depth wetted not."

(*Spicil. Solesmen.* Edidit T. B. Pitra, *S. Romanus*, xvi. 13, *Cant. de Passione.* 120.)

[5] 1 John i. 2. The Life with the Father = John i. 1, 14. The Life manifested = John i. 14 to end.

Epistle. We have towards its close a *second* synopsis of the whole framework of the Gospel; not now the theory of the Person of Christ, which in such a life was necessarily placed at its beginning, but of the human conception which pervaded the Evangelist's composition.

The second synopsis, not of the contents of the Gospel, but of the aim and conception which it assumed in the form into which it was moulded by St. John, is given by the Epistle with a fulness which omits scarcely a paragraph of the Gospel. In the space of six verses of the fifth chapter the word *witness*, as verb or substantive, is repeated *ten* times.[1] The simplicity of St. John's artless rhetoric can make no more emphatic claim on our attention. The Gospel is indeed a tissue woven out of many lines of evidence human and divine. Compress its purpose into one single word. No doubt it is supremely the Gospel of the Divinity of Jesus. But, next to that, it may best be defined as the Gospel of *Witness*. These witnesses we may take in the order of the Epistle. St. John feels that his Gospel is more than a book; it is a past made everlastingly present. Such as the great Life was in history, so it stands for ever. Jesus *is* "the propitiation, *is* righteous," "is *here*."[2] So the great influences round His Person, the manifold witnesses of His Life, stand witnessing for ever in the Gospel and in the Church. What are these? (1) The Spirit is ever *witnessing*. So our Lord in the Gospel—"when the Comforter is come, He shall witness of

[1] The A.V. (1 John v. 6-12) obscures this by a too great sensitiveness to monotony. The language of the verses is varied unfortunately by "bear record" (ver. 7), "hath testified" (ver. 9), "believeth not the record" (ver. 10), "this is the record" (ver. 11).

[2] 1 John ii. 2-29, iii 7, iv. 3, v. 20.

Me."[1] No one can doubt that the Spirit is one pre-eminent subject of the Gospel. Indeed, teaching about Him, above all as the witness to Christ, occupies three unbroken chapters in one place.[2] (2) The *water* is ever witnessing. So long as St. John's Gospel lasts, and permeates the Church with its influence, the water must so testify. There is scarcely a paragraph of it where water is not; almost always with some relation to Christ. The witness of the Baptist[3] is, "I baptize with water." The Jordan itself bears witness that all its waters cannot give that which He bestows who is "preferred before" John.[4] Is not the water of Cana that was made wine a witness to His glory?[5] The birth of "water and of the Spirit,"[6] is another witness. And so in the Gospel section after section. The water of Jacob's well; the water of the pool of Bethesda; the waters of the sea of Galilee, with their stormy waves upon which He walked; the water outpoured at the feast of tabernacles, with its application to the river of living water; the water of Siloam; the water poured into the basin, when Jesus washed the disciples' feet; the water which, with the blood, streamed from the riven side upon the cross; the water of the sea of Galilee in its gentler mood, when Jesus showed Himself on its beach to the seven; as long as all this is recorded in the Gospel, as long as the sacrament of Baptism, with its visible water and its invisible grace working in the regenerate, abides among the

[1] John xv. 26.

[2] John xiv., xv., xvi., Cf. vii. 39. The witness of the Spirit in the Apostolic ministry will be found John xx. 22.

[3] John i. 19.

[4] John i. 16, 31, 33.

[5] John ii. 9, iv. 46.

[6] John iii. 5.

faithful;—so long is the water ever witnessing.[1] (3) The Blood is ever "witnessing." Expiation once for all; purification continually from the blood outpoured; drinking the blood of the Son of Man by participation in the sacrament of His love, with the grace and strength that it gives day by day to innumerable souls; the Gospel concentrated into that great sacrifice; the Church's gifts of benediction summarised in the unspeakable Gift; this is the unceasing witness of the *Blood*. (4) "The witness of men" fills the Gospel from beginning to end. The glorious series of confessions wrung from willing and unwilling hearts form the points of division round which the whole narrative may be grouped. Let us think of all those attestations which lie between the Baptist's precious testimony with the sweet yet fainter utterances of Andrew, Philip, Nathanael, and the perfect creed of Christendom condensed into the burning words of Thomas—"my Lord and my God."[2] What a range of feeling and faith; what a variety of attestation coming from human souls, sometimes wrung from them half unwillingly, sometimes uttered at crisis-moments with an impulse that could not be resisted! The witness of men in the Gospel, and the assurance of one testimony that was to be given by the Apostles individually and collectively,[3] besides the evidences already named includes the following—the witness of Nicodemus, of the Samaritan woman, of the Samaritans, of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, of Simon Peter, of the officers of the

[1] John iv. 5, 7, 11, 12, v. 1, 8, vi. 19, vii. 35, 37, ix. 7, xiii. 1, 14, xix 34, xxi. 1, 8. In the other great Johannic book water is constantly mentioned. Apoc. vii. 7, xiv. 7, xvi. 5, xxi. 6, xxii. 1, xxii. 17.

[2] John i. 19, 29, 32, 34, 35, 36, 41, 45, 47, xix. 27.

[3] John xv. 27.

Jewish authorities, of the blind man, of Pilate.[1] (5) The "witness of God" occupies also a great position in the fourth Gospel. That witness may be said to be given in five forms: the witness of the Father,[2] of Christ Himself,[3] of the Holy Spirit,[4] of Scripture,[5] of miracles.[6] This great cloud of witnesses, human and divine, finds its appropriate completion in another subjective witness.[7] The whole body of evidence passes from the region of the intellectual to that of the moral and spiritual life. The *evidence* acquires that *evidentness* which is to all our knowledge what the sap is to the tree. The faithful carries it in his heart; it goes about with him, rests with him day and night, is close to him in life and death. He, the principle of whose being is belief ever going out of itself and resting its acts of faith on the Son of God, has all that manifold witness in him.[8]

It would be easy to enlarge upon the verbal connection between the Epistle before us and the Gospel which it accompanied. We might draw out (as has

[1] John iii. 2. The Baptist's final witness (iii. 25, 33, iv. 39, 42, v. 15, vi. 68, 69, vii. 46, xix. 4, 6). Note, too, the accentuation of the idea of *witness* (John v. 31, 39). It is to be regretted that the R.V. also has sometimes obscured this important term by substituting a different English word, *e.g.*, "the word of the woman who *testified*" (John iv. 39).

[2] John viii. 18, xii. 28.

[3] Ibid. viii. 17, 18.

[4] Ibid. xv. 26.

[5] Ibid. v. 39, 46, xix. 35, 36, 37.

[6] Ibid. v. 36.

[7] This sixth witness (1 John v. 10) exactly answers to John xx. 30, 31.

[8] ὁ πιστεύων εἰς τὸν υἱόν, κτλ (v. 10). The construction is different in the words which immediately follow (ὁ μὴ πιστεύων τῷ θεῷ), not even giving Him credence, not *believing Him*, much less *believing on Him*.

often been done) a list of quotations from the Gospel, a whole common treasury of mystic language; but we prefer to leave an undivided impression upon the mind. A document which gives us a synopsis of the *contents* of another document at the beginning, and a synoptical analysis of its predominant idea at the close, covering the entire work, and capable of absorbing every part of it (except some necessary adjuncts of a rich and crowded narrative), has a connection with it which is vital and integral. The Epistle is at once an abstract of the contents of the Gospel, and a key to its purport. To the Gospel, at least to it and the Epistle considered as integrally one, the Apostle refers when he says: "these things write we unto you."[1]

St. John had asserted that one end of his declaration was to make his readers hold fast "fellowship with us," *i.e.*, with the Church as the Apostolic Church; aye, and

[1] The view here advocated of the relation of the Epistle to the Gospel of St. John, and of the brief but complete analytical synopsis in the opening words of the Epistle, appears to us to represent the earliest known interpretation as given by the author of the famous fragment of the Muratorian Canon, the first catalogue of the books of the N. T. (written between the middle and close of the second century). After his statement of the circumstances which led to the composition of the fourth Gospel, and an assertion of the perfect internal unity of the Evangelical narratives, the author of the fragment proceeds. "What wonder then if John brings forward each matter, point by point, with such consecutive order (tam constanter singula), even in his Epistles saying, when he comes to write in his own person (dicens in semetipso), 'what we have seen with our eyes, and heard with our ears, and our hands have handled, these things have we written.' For thus, in orderly arrangement and consecutive language he professes himself not only an eye-witness, but a hearer, and yet further a writer of the wonderful things of the Lord." [So we understand the writer. "Sic enim non solum visorem, sed et auditorem, sed et scriptorem omnium mirabilium Domini, per ordinem profitetur." The fragment, with copious annotations, may be found in *Reliquæ Sacræ*, Routh, Tom. i., 394, 434.]

that fellowship of ours is "with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ;" "and these things," he continues (with special reference to his Gospel, as spoken of in his opening words), "we write unto you, that your joy may be fulfilled."

There is as truly a joy as a "patience and comfort of the Scriptures." The Apostle here speaks of "your joy," but that implied *his* also.

All great literature, like all else that is beautiful, is a "joy for ever." To the true student his books are this. But this is so only with a few really great books. We are not speaking of works of exact science. Butler, Pascal, Bacon, Shakespeare, Homer, Scott, theirs is work of which congenial spirits never grow quite tired. But to be capable of giving out joy, books must have been written with it. The Scotch poet tells us, that no poet ever found the Muse, until he had learned to walk beside the brook, and "no think long." That which is not thought over with pleasure; that which, as it gradually rises before the author in its unity, does not fill him with delight; will never permanently give pleasure to readers. He must know joy before he can say—"these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."

The book that is to give joy must be a part of a man's self. That is just what most books are not. They are laborious, diligent, useful perhaps; they are not interesting or delightful. How touching it is, when the poor old stiff hand must write, and the overworked brain think, for bread! Is there anything so pathetic in literature as Scott setting his back bravely to the wall, and forcing from his imagination the reluctant creations which used to issue with such splendid profusion from its haunted chambers?

Of the conditions under which an inspired writer

pursued his labours we know but little. But some conditions are apparent in the books of St. John with which we are now concerned. The fourth Gospel is a book written without *arrière pensée*, without literary conceit, without the paralysing dread of criticism. What verdict the polished society of Ephesus would pronounce; what sneers would circulate in philosophic quarters; what the numerous heretics would murmur in their conventicles; what critics within the Church might venture to whisper, missing perhaps favourite thoughts and catch-words;[1] St. John cared no more than if he were dead. He communed with the memories of the past; he listened for the music of the Voice which had been the teacher of his life. To be faithful to these memories, to recall these words, to be true to Jesus, was his one aim. No one can doubt that the Gospel was written with a full delight. No one who is capable of feeling, ever has doubted that it was written as if with "a feather dropped from an angel's wing;" that without aiming at anything but truth, it attains in parts at least a transcendent beauty. At the close of the prœmium, after the completest theological *formula* which the Church has ever possessed—the still, even pressure of a tide of thought—we have a parenthetic sentence, like the splendid unexpected rush and swell of a sudden wave ("we beheld the glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father"); then after the parenthesis a

[1] For whatever reason, four classical terms (if we may so call them) of the Christian religion are excluded, or nearly excluded, from the Gospel of St. John, and from its companion document. *Church, Gospel, repentance,* occur nowhere. *Grace* only once (John i. 14; see, however, 2 John 3; Apoc. i. 4; xxii. 21), *faith* as a substantive only once. (1 John v. 4, but in Apoc. ii. 13-19; xiii. 10; xiv. 123.)

soft and murmuring fall of the whole great tide ("full of grace and truth"). Can we suppose that the Apostle hung over his sentence with literary zest? The number of writers is small who can give us an everlasting truth by a single word, a single pencil touch; who, having their mind loaded with thought, are wise enough to keep that strong and eloquent silence which is the prerogative only of the highest genius. St. John gives us one of these everlasting pictures, of these inexhaustible symbols, in three little words—"He then having received the sop, went immediately out, and *it was night*."[1] Do we suppose that he admired the perfect effect of that powerful self-restraint? Just before the crucifixion he writes—"Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe, and Pilate saith unto them, Behold the Man!"[2] The pathos, the majesty, the royalty of sorrow, the admiration and pity of Pilate, have been for centuries the inspiration of Christian art. Did St. John congratulate himself upon the image of sorrow and of beauty which stands for ever in these lines? With St. John as a writer it is as with St. John delineated in the fresco at Padua by the genius of Giotto. The form of the ascending saint is made visible through a reticulation of rays of light in colours as splendid as ever came from mortal pencil; but the rays issue entirely from the Saviour, whose face and form are full before him.

The feeling of the Church has always been that the Gospel of St. John was a solemn work of faith and prayer. The oldest extant fragment upon the canon of the New Testament tells us that the Gospel was undertaken after earnest invitations from the brethren and the bishops, with solemn united fasting; not with-

[1] ἦν δὲ νύξ. John xiii. 30. [2] John xix. 5.

out special revelation to Andrew the Apostle that John was to do the work.[1] A later and much less important document connected in its origin with Patmos embodies one beautiful legend about the composition of the Gospel. It tells how the Apostle was about to leave Patmos for Ephesus; how the Christians of the island besought him to leave in writing an account of the Incarnation, and mysterious life of the Son of God; how St. John and his chosen friends went forth from the haunts of men about a mile, and halted in a quiet spot called the gorge of Rest,[2] and then ascended the mountain which overhung it. There they remained three days. "Then," writes Prochorus, "he ordered me to go down to the town for paper and ink. And after two days I found him standing rapt in prayer. Said he to me—'take the ink and paper, and stand on my right hand.' And I did so. And there was a great lightning and thunder, so that the mountain shook. And I fell on the ground as if dead. Whereupon John stretched forth his hand and took hold of me, and said—'stand up at this spot at my right hand.' After which he prayed again, and after his prayer said unto me—'son Prochorus, what thou hearest from my mouth, write upon the sheets.' And having opened his mouth as he was standing praying, and looking up to heaven, he began to say—'in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' And so following on, he spake in order, standing as he was, and I wrote sitting."[3]

[1] Canon. Murator. (apud Routh., *Reliq. Sacræ*, Tom. i., 394).

[2] *ἐν τόπῳ ἡσύχῳ λεγομένῳ καταπαύσεις.*

[3] This passage is translated from the Greek text of the manuscript of Patmos, attributed to Prochorus, as given by M. Guérin. (*Description de l'Isle de Patmos*, pp. 25-29.)

True instinct which tells us that the Gospel of St. John was the fruit of prayer as well as of memory, that it was thought out in some valley of rest, some hush among the hills; that it came from a solemn joy which it breathed forth upon others! "These things write I unto you, that your joy may be fulfilled." Generation after generation it has been so. In the numbers numberless of the Redeemed, there can be very few who have not been brightened by the joy of that book. Still, at one funeral after another, hearts are soothed by the word in it which says—"I am the Resurrection and the Life." Still the sorrowful and the dying ask to hear again and again—"let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." A brave young officer sent to the war in Africa, from a regiment at home, where he had caused grief by his extravagance, penitent, and dying in his tent, during the fatal day of Isandula, scrawled in pencil—"dying, dear father and mother—happy—for Jesus says, 'He that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.'" Our English Communion Office, with its divine beauty, is a texture shot through and through with golden threads from the discourse at Capernaum. Still are the disciples glad when they see the Lord in that record. It is the book of the Church's smiles; it is the gladness of the saints; it is the purest fountain of joy in all the literature of earth.

NOTE A.

THE thorough connection of the Epistle with the Gospel may be made more clear by the following tabulated analysis:—

The (A) *beginning* and (B) the *close* of the Epistle contain *two* abstracts, longer and shorter, of the contents and bearing of the Gospel.

A.

i.—1 John i. 1.

1. "That which was from the beginning—concerning the Word of Life" = John i. 1-15.

2. (*a*) "Which we have *heard*" = John i. 38, 39, 42, 47, 50, 51, ii. 4, 7, 8, 16, 19, iii. 3, 22, iv. 7, 39, 48, 50, v. 6, 47, vi. 5, 70, vii. 6, 39, viii. 7, 58, ix. 3, 41, x. 1, 39, xi. 4, 45, xii. 7, 50, xiii. 6, 38, xiv., xvii., xviii. 14, 37, xix. 11, 26, 27, 28, 30, xx. 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 23, 27, 29, xxi. 5, 6, 10, 12, 22.

(*b*) "Which we have seen *with our eyes*" = John i. 29, 36, 39, ii. 11, vi. 2, 14, 19, ix., xi. 44, xiii. 4, 5, xvii. 1, xviii. 6, xix. 5, 17, 18, 34, 38, xx. 5, 14, 20, 25, 29, xxi. 1, 14.

(*c*) "Which we gazed upon" = *ibid.*

(*d*) "Which we have handled" = John xx. 27 (refers also to a synoptical Gospel, Luke xxiv. 39, 40).

ii.—1 John i. 2.

1. "The Life was manifested" = John i. 29—xxi. 25.

2. (*a*) "We have seen" = (A *i.* 2 (*b*)).

(*b*) "And bear witness" = John i. 7, 19, 37, iii. 2, 27, 33, iv. 39, vi. 69, xx. 28, 30, 31, xxi. 24.

(*c*) "And declare unto you" = John *passim.*

"The Life, the Eternal Life, which

א "Was with the Father" = John i. 1-4.

ב "And was manifested unto us" = John *passim.*

B.

i.—1 John v. 6-10.

Summary of the Gospel as a Gospel of *witness.*

1. "The Spirit beareth witness" = John i. 32, xiv., xv., xx. 22.

2. "The water beareth witness" = John i. 28, ii. 9, iii. 5, iv. 13, 14, v. 1, 9, vi. 19, vii. 37, ix. 7, xiii. 5, xix. 34, xxi. 1.

3. "The blood beareth witness" = John vi. 53, 54, 55, 56, xix. 34.

4. "The witness of men" = (A. *ii.* 1 (*b*)) Also John i. 45, 49, iii. 2, iv. 39, vii. 46, xii. 12, 13, 17, 19, 20, 21, xviii. 38, xix. 35, xx. 28.

5. "The witness of God" =

(*a*) Scripture = John i. 45, v. 39, 46, xix. 36, 37.
(*b*) Christ's own = John viii. 17, 18, 46, xv. 30, **xviii. 37.**
(*c*) His Father's = John v. 37, viii. 18, xii. 28.
(*d*) His works = John v. 36, x. 25, **xv. 24.**

iii.—1 John v. 20.

We know (*i.e.*, by the Gospel) that—

1. "The Son of God is come" (ἥκειν), "has come and is here."

Note.—בָּאתִי = ἥκω, LXX. Psalm xl. 7. "*Venio* symbolum quasi Domini Jesu fuit." (Bengel on Heb. x. 7), the *Ich Dien* of the Son of the Father—ἐγὼ γάρ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐξῆλθον καὶ ἥκω. "I came forth from God, and am here" (John viii. 4) = John i. 29—xxi. 23 (John xiv. 18, 21, 23, xvi. 16, 22, form part of the thought "is here").

2. "And hath given us an understanding" = gift of the Spirit, John xiv., xv., xvi. (especially 13, 16).

3. "This is the very God and eternal Life" = John i. 1, 4.

The whole Gospel of St. John brings out these primary principles of the Faith,—

That the Son of God has come. That He is now and ever present with His people. That the Holy Spirit gives them a new faculty of spiritual discernment. That Christ is the very God and the Life of men.

DISCOURSE III.

THE POLEMICAL ELEMENT IN THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. JOHN.

"Dum Magistri super pectus
Fontem haurit intellectûs
Et doctrinæ flumina,
Fiunt, ipso situ loci,
Verbo fides, auris voci,
Meus Deo contermina.

"Unde mentis per excessus,
Carnis, sensûs super gressus,
Errorumque nubila,
Contra veri solis lumen
Visum cordis et acumen
Figit velut aquila."

Adam of St. Victor, Seq. xxxii.

"Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. Every spirit that confesseth not [that] Jesus Christ [is come in the flesh] is not of God."—1 JOHN iv. 2, 3.

A DISCUSSION (however far from technical completeness) of the polemical element in St. John's Epistle, probably seems likely to be destitute of interest or of instruction, except to ecclesiastical or philosophical antiquarians. Those who believe the Epistle to be a *divine* book must, however, take a different view of the matter. St. John was not merely dealing with forms of human error which were local and fortuitous. In refuting *them* he was enunciating principles of universal import, of almost illimitable

application. Let us pass by those obscure sects, those subtle curiosities of error, which the diligence of minute research has excavated from the masses of erudition under which they have been buried; which theologians, like other antiquarians, have sometimes labelled with names at once uncouth and imaginative. Let us fix our attention upon such broad and well-defined features of heresy as credible witnesses have indelibly fixed upon the contemporaneous heretical thought of Asia Minor; and we shall see not only a great precision in St. John's words, but a radiant image of truth, which is equally adapted to enlighten us in the peculiar dangers of our age.

Controversy is the condition under which all truth must be held, which is not in necessary subject-matter—which is not either mathematical or physical. In the case of the second, controversy is active, until the fact of the physical law is established beyond the possibility of rational discussion; until self-consistent thought can only think upon the postulate of its admission. Now in these departments all the argument is on one side. We are not in a state of suspended speculation, leaning neither to affirmation nor denial, which is *doubt.* We are not in the position of inclining either to one side or the other, by an almost impalpable overplus of evidence, which is *suspicion;* or by those additions to this slender stock, which convert suspicion into *opinion.* We are not merely yielding a strong adhesion to one side, while we must yet admit, to ourselves at least, that our knowledge is not perfect, nor absolutely manifest—which is the mental and moral position of *belief.* In necessary subject-matter, we know and see with that perfect intellectual vision for which controversy is impossible.[1]

[1] "Proprium est credentis ut cum assensu cogitet." "The intellect of him who believes assents to the thing believed, not because he

The region of belief must therefore, in our present condition, be a region from which controversy cannot be excluded.

Religious controversialists may be divided into three classes, for each of which we may find an emblem in the animal creation. The first are the nuisances, at times the numerous nuisances, of Churches. These controversialists delight in showing that the convictions of persons whom they happen to dislike, can, more or less plausibly, be pressed to unpopular conclusions. They are incessant fault-finders. Some of them, if they had an opportunity, might delight in finding the sun guilty in his daily worship of the many-coloured ritualism of the western clouds. Controversialists of this class, if minute are venomous, and capable of inflicting a degree of pain quite out of proportion to their strength. Their emblem may be found somewhere in the range of "every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." The second class of controversialists is of a much higher nature. Their emblem is the hawk with his bright eye, with the forward throw of his pinions, his rushing flight along the woodland skirt, his unerring stroke. Such hawks of the Churches, whose delight is in pouncing upon fallacies, fulfil an important function. They rid us of tribes of mischievous winged errors. The third class of controversialists is that which embraces St. John supremely—such minds also as Augustine's in his loftiest and most

sees that thing either in itself or by logical reference to first self-evident principles; but because it is so far convinced by Divine authority as to assent to things which it does not see, and on account of the dominance of the will in setting the intellect in motion." This sentence is taken from a passage of Aquinas which appears to be of great and permanent value. *Summa Theolog.* 2^a, 2^{ae} quæst. i. art. 4. quæst. v. art. 2.

inspired moments, such as those which have endowed the Church with the Nicene Creed. Of such the eagle is the emblem. Over the grosser atmosphere of earthly anger or imperfect motives, over the clouds of error, poised in the light of the True Sun, with the eagle's upward wing and the eagle's sunward eye, St. John looks upon the truth. He is indeed the eagle of the four Evangelists, the eagle of God. If the eagle could speak with our language, his style would have something of the purity of the sky and of the brightness of the light. He would warn his nestlings against losing their way in the banks of clouds that lie below him so far. At times he might show that there is a danger or an error whose position he might indicate by the sweep of his wing, or by descending for a moment to strike.

There are then *polemics* in the Epistle and in the Gospel of St. John. But we refuse to hunt down some obscure heresy in every sentence. It will be enough to indicate the master heresy of Asia Minor, to which St. John undoubtedly refers, with its intellectual and moral perils. In so doing, we shall find the very truth which our own generation especially needs.

The prophetic words addressed by St. Paul to the Church of Ephesus thirty years before the date of this Epistle had found only too complete a fulfilment. "From among their own selves," at Ephesus in particular, through the Churches of Asia Minor in general, men *had* arisen "speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them."[1] The prediction began to justify itself when Timothy was Bishop of Ephesus only five or six years later. A few significant words

[1] Acts xx. 30.

in the First Epistle to Timothy let us see the heretical influences that were at work. St. Paul speaks with the solemnity of a closing charge when he warns Timothy against what were at once[1] "profane babblings," and "antitheses of the Gnosis which is falsely so called." In an earlier portion of the same Epistle the young Bishop is exhorted to charge certain men not to teach a "different doctrine," neither to give "heed to myths and genealogies," out of whose endless mazes no intellect entangled in them can ever find its way.[2] Those commentators put us on a false scent who would have us look after Judaizing error, Jewish "stemmata." The reference is not to Judaistic ritualism, but to semi-Pagan philosophical speculation. The "genealogies" are systems of divine potencies which the Gnostics (and probably some Jewish Rabbis of Gnosticising tendency) called "æons,"[3] and so the earliest Christian writers understood the word.

Now without entering into the details of Gnosticism, this may be said of its general method and purpose. It aspired at once to accept and to transform the Christian creed; to elevate its faith into a philosophy, a *knowledge*—and then to make this knowledge cashier and supersede faith, love, holiness, redemption itself.

This system was strangely eclectic, and amalgamated certain elements not only of Greek and Egyptian, but of Persian and Indian Pantheistic thought. It was

[1] *τὰς βεβήλους κενοφωνίας, καὶ ἀντιθέσεις τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως.* 1 Tim. vi. 20. The "antitheses" may either touch with slight sarcasm upon pompous pretensions to scientific logical method; or may denote the really self-contradictory character of these elaborate compositions; or again, their polemical opposition to the Christian creed.

[2] *μύθοις καὶ γενεαλογίαις ἀπεράντοις.* 1 Tim. i. 3, 4.

[3] Irenæus quotes 1 Tim. i. 4, and interprets it of the Gnostic 'æons.' *Adv. Hæres.*, i. Procem.

infected throughout with dualism and doketism. Dualism held that all good and evil in the universe proceeded from two first principles, good and evil. Matter was the power of evil whose home is in the region of darkness. Minds which started from this fundamental view could only accept the Incarnation provisionally and with reserve, and must at once proceed to explain it away. "The Word was made flesh;" but the Word of God, the True Light, could not be personally united to an actual material system called a human body, plunged in the world of matter, darkened and contaminated by its immersion. The human flesh in which Jesus appeared to be seen was fictitious. Redemption was a drama with a shadow for its hero. The phantom of a redeemer was nailed to the phantom of a cross. Philosophical dualism logically became theological *doketism*. Doketism logically evaporated dogmas, sacraments, duties, redemption.[1]

It may be objected that this doketism has been a mere temporary and local aberration of the human intellect; a metaphysical curiosity, with no real roots in human nature. If so, its refutation is an obsolete piece of an obsolete controversy; and the Epistle in some of its most vital portions is a dead letter.

[1] Few phenomena of criticism are more unaccountable than the desire to evade any acknowledgment of the historical existence of these singular heresies. Not long after St. John's death, Polycarp, in writing to the Philippians, quotes 1 John iv. 3, and proceeds to show that doketism had consummated its work down to the last fibres of the root of the creed, by two negations—no resurrection of the body, no judgment. (Polycarp, *Epist. ad Philip.*, vii.) Ignatius twice deals with the Doketæ at length. To the Trallians he delivers what may be called an antidoketic creed, concluding in the tone of one who was wounded by what he was daily hearing. "Be deaf then when any man speaks unto you without Jesus Christ, who is of Mary, who truly was born, truly suffered under Pontius Pilate, truly was crucified and

Now of course literal doketism is past and gone, dead and buried. The progress of the human mind, the slow and resistless influence of the logic of common sense, the wholesome influence of the sciences of observation in correcting visionary metaphysics, have swept away æons, emanations, dualism,[1] and the rest. But a subtler, and to modern minds infinitely more attractive, doketism is round us, and accepted, as far as words go, with a passionate enthusiasm.

What is this doketism?

Let us refer to the history and to the language of a mind of singular subtlety and power.

In George Eliot's early career she was induced to prepare for the press a translation of Strauss's mythical explanation of *the Life of Jesus*. It is no disrespect to so great a memory to say, that at that period of her career, at least, Miss Evans must have been unequal to grapple with such a work, if she desired to do so from a Christian point of view. She had not apparently studied the history or the structure of the Gospels. What she knew of their meaning she had imbibed from an antiquated and unscientific school of theologians. The faith of a sciolist engaged in a struggle for its life

died, truly also was raised from the dead. But if some who are unbelieving say that He suffered apparently, *as if in vision, being visionary themselves*, why am I a prisoner? why do I choose to fight with wild beasts?" (Ignat., *Ep. ad Trall.*, iv. x.) The play upon the name dok-tæ cannot be mistaken (λέγουσιν τὸ δοκεῖν πεπονθέναι αὐτὸν, αὐτοὶ ὄντες τὸ δοκεῖν). Ignatius writes to another Church—"What profited it me if one praiseth me but blasphemeth my Lord, not confessing that He bears true human flesh. They abstain from Eucharist and prayer, because they confess not that the Eucharist is flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ." (*Ep. ad Smyrn.*, v. vi. vii.)

[1] The elder Mr. Mill, however, appears to have seriously leaned to this as a conceivable solution of the contradictory phenomena of existence.

with the fatal strength of a critical giant instructed in the negative lore of all ages, and sharpened by hatred of the Christian religion, met with the result which was to be expected. Her faith expired, not without some painful throes. She fell a victim to the fallacy of youthful conceit—*I* cannot answer this or that objection, *therefore* it is unanswerable. She wrote at first that she was "Strauss-sick." It made her ill to dissect the beautiful story of the crucifixion. She took to herself a consolation singular in the circumstances. The sight of an ivory crucifix, and of a pathetic picture of the Passion, made her capable of enduring the first shock of the loss which her heart had sustained. That is, she found comfort in looking at tangible reminders of a scene which had ceased to be an historical reality, of a sufferer who had faded from a living Redeemer into the spectre of a visionary past. After a time, however, she feels able to propose to herself and others "a new starting point. We can never have a satisfactory basis for the history of the man Jesus, but that negation does not affect the Idea of the Christ, either in its historical influence, or its great symbolic meanings."[1] Yes! a Christ who has no history, of whom we do not possess one undoubted word, of whom we know, and can know, nothing; who has no flesh of fact, no blood of life; an idea, not a man; this is the Christ of modern doketism. The method of this widely diffused school is to separate the *sentiments* of admiration which the history inspires from the *history* itself; to sever the *ideas* of the faith from the *facts* of the faith, and then to present the *ideas* thus surviving the dissolvents of criticism, as at once the refutation of the facts and the substitute for them.

[1] *Life* vol. ii., 359, 360.

This may be pretty writing, though false and illogical writing is rarely even *that;* but a little consideration will show that this new starting point is not even a plausible substitute for the old belief.

(1) We question simple believers in the first instance. We ask them what is the great religious power in Christianity for themselves, and for others like-minded? What makes people pure, good, self-denying, nurses of the sick, missionaries to the heathen? They will tell us that the power lies, not in any doketic idea of a Christ-life which was never lived, but in "the conviction that that idea was really and perfectly incarnated in an actual career,"[1] of which we have a record literally and absolutely true in all essential particulars. When we turn to the past of the Church, we find that as it is with these persons, so it has ever been with the saints. For instance, we hear St. Paul speaking of his whole life. He tells us that "whether we went out of ourselves it was unto God, or whether we be sober, it is for you;" that is to say, such a life has two aspects, one God-ward, one man-ward. Its God-ward aspect is a noble insanity, its man-ward aspect a noble sanity; the first with its beautiful enthusiasm, the second with its saving common sense. What is the source of this? "*For* the love of Christ constraineth us,"—forces the whole stream of life to flow between these two banks without the deviations of selfishness—"because we thus judge, that He died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but to Him who for their sakes died and rose again."[2] It was the real unselfish life of a real unselfish Man which

[1] Much use has here been made of a truly remarkable article in the *Spectator*, Jan. 31st, 1885.

[2] 2 Cor. v. 13-15.

made such a life as that of St. Paul a possibility. Or we may think of the first beginning of St. John's love for our Lord. When he turned to the past, he remembered one bright day about ten in the morning, when the real Jesus turned to him and to another with a real look, and said with a human voice, "what seek ye?" and then—"come, and ye shall see."[1] It was the real living love that won the only kind of love which could enable the old man to write as he did in this Epistle so many years afterwards—"we love because He first loved us."[2]

(2) We address ourselves next to those who look at Christ simply as an ideal. We venture to put to them a definite question. You believe that there is no solid basis for the history of the man Jesus; that His life as an historical reality is lost in a dazzling mist of legend and adoration. Has the idea of a Christ, divorced from all accompaniment of authentic fact, unfixed in a definite historical form, uncontinued in an abiding existence, been operative or inoperative for yourselves? Has it been a practical power and motive, or an occasional and evanescent sentiment? There can be no doubt about the answer. It is not a make-belief but a belief which gives purity and power. It is not an ideal of Jesus but the blood of Jesus which cleanseth us from all sin.

There are other lessons of abiding practical importance to be drawn from the polemical elements in St. John's Epistle. These, however, we can only briefly indicate because we wish to leave an undivided impression of that which seems to be St. John's chief object *controversially*. There were Gnostics in Asia Minor for

[1] John i. 43. [2] 1 John iv 19.

whom the mere *knowledge* of certain supposed spiritual truths was all in all, as there are those amongst ourselves who care for little but what are called clear views. For such St. John writes—"and hereby we do *know* that we *know* Him, if we keep His commandments."[1] There were heretics in and about Ephesus who conceived that the special favour of God, or the illumination which they obtained by junction with the sect to which they had "gone out" from the Church, neutralised the poison of sin, and made innocuous for *them* that which might have been deadly for others. They suffered, as they thought, no more contamination by it, than "gold by lying upon the dunghill" (to use a favourite metaphor of their own). St. John utters a principle which cleaves through every fallacy in every age, which says or insinuates that sin subjective can in any case cease to be sin objective. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law. All unrighteousness is sin."[2] Possibly within the Church itself, certainly among the sectarians without it, there was a disposition to lessen the glory of the Incarnation, by looking upon the Atonement as narrow and partial in its aim. St. John's unhesitating statement is that "He is the propitiation for the whole world." Thus does the eagle of the Church ever fix his gaze above the clouds of error, upon the Sun of universal truth.

Above all, over and through his negation of temporary and local errors about the person of Christ, St. John leads the Church in all ages to the true Christ. Cerinthus, in a form which seems to us eccentric and revolting, proclaimed a Jesus not born of a virgin, temporarily endowed with the sovereign power of the

[1] 1 John ii. 3. [2] 1 John iii. 4, v. 17.

Christ, deprived of Him before his passion and resurrection, while the Christ remained spiritual and impassible. He taught a *commonplace* Jesus. At the beginning of his Epistle and Gospel, John "wings his soul, and leads his readers onward and upward." He is like a man who stands upon the shore and looks upon town and coast and bay. Then another takes the man off with him far to sea. All that he surveyed before is now lost to him; and as he gazes ever oceanward, he does not stay his eye upon any intervening object, but lets it range over the infinite azure. So the Apostle leads us above all creation, and transports us to the ages before it; makes us raise our eyes, not suffering us to find any end in the stretch above, since end is none.[2] That "in the beginning," "from the beginning," of the Epistle and Gospel, includes nothing short of the eternal God. The doketics of many shades proclaimed an ideological, a misty Christ. "Every spirit which confesseth Jesus Christ as in flesh having come is of God, and every spirit which confesseth not Jesus, is not of God." "Many deceivers have gone out into the world, they who confess not Jesus Christ coming in flesh."[3] Such a Christ of mist as these words warn us against is again shaped by more powerful intellects and touched with tenderer lights. But the shadowy Christ of George Eliot and of Mill is equally arraigned by the hand of St. John. Each believer may well think within himself—I must die, and that, it may be, very soon; I must be alone with God, and my own soul; with that which I am, and have been; with my memories, and with my sins. In that

[1] Every one who reads Greek should refer to the magnificent passage, *S. Joann. Chrysos., in Joann., Homil.* ii. 4.

[2] 1 John iv. 2; 2 John v. 7. See notes on the passages.

hour the weird desolate language of the Psalmist will find its realisation : "lover and friend hast thou put from me, and mine acquaintance are—*darkness.*"[1] Then we want, and then we may find, a real Saviour. Then we shall know that if we have only a doketic Christ, we shall indeed be alone—for "except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you."[2]

NOTE.

THE two following extracts, in addition to what has been already said in this discourse, will supply the reader with that which it is most necessary for him to know upon the heresies of Asia Minor. 1. "Two principal heresies upon the nature of Christ then prevailed, each diametrically opposite to the other, as well as to the Catholic faith. One was the heresy of the Doketæ, which destroyed the verity of the *Human Nature* in Christ; the other was the heresy of the Ebionites, who denied the *Divine Nature*, and the eternal Generation, and inclined to press the observation of the ceremonial law. Ancient writers allow these as heresies of the first century; all admit that they were powerful in the age of Ignatius. Hence Theodoret (*Proœm.*) divided the books of these heresies into two categories. In the first he included those who put forward the idea of a second Creator, and asserted that the Lord had appeared illusively. In the second he placed those who maintained that the Lord was merely a man. Of the first, Jerome observed (*Adv. Lucifer.* xxiii.) 'that while the Apostles yet remained upon the earth, while the blood of Christ was almost smoking upon

[1] Psalm lviii. 18. [2] John vi. 53.

the sod of Judæa, some asserted that the body of the Lord was a phantom.' Of the second, the same writer remarked that 'St. John, at the invitation of the bishops of Asia Minor, wrote his Gospel against Cerinthus and other heretics—and especially against the dogma of the Ebionites then rising into existence, who asserted that Christ did not exist before Mary.' Epiphanius notes that these heresies were mainly of Asia Minor (*φημὶ δὲ ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ*), *Hæres.* lvi." (Pearson, *Vindic. Ignat.*, ii., c. i., p. 351.)

2. "Two of these sects or schools are very ancient, and seem to have been referred to by St. John. The first is that of the Naassenians or Ophites. The antiquity of this sect is guaranteed to us by the author of the *Philosophumena*, who represents them as the real founders of Gnosticism. "Later," he says, "they were called *Gnostics*, pretending that they only *knew the depths*." (To this allusion is made Apoc. ii. 24, which would identify these sectaries with the Balaamites and Nicolaitans.) The second of these great heresies of Asia Minor is the doketic. The publication of the *Philosophumena* has furnished us with much more precise information about their tenets. We need not say much about the divine emanation—the fall of souls into matter, their corporeal captivity, their final rehabilitation (these are merely the ordinary Gnostic ideas). But we may follow what they assert about the Saviour and His manifestation in the world. They admit in Him the only Son of the Father (*ὁ μονογενὴς παῖς ἄνωθεν αἰώνιος*), who descended to the reign of shadows and the Virgin's womb, where He clothed Himself in a gross, human material body. But this was a vestment of no integrally personal and permanent character; it was, indeed, a sort of masquerade, an

artifice or fiction imagined to deceive the prince of this world. The Saviour at His baptism received a second birth, and clad Himself with a subtler texture of body, formed in the bosom of the waters—if that can be termed a body which was but a fantastic texture woven or framed upon the model of His earthly body. During the hours of the Passion, the flesh formed in Mary's womb, and it alone, was nailed to the tree. The great Archon or Demiurgus, whose work that flesh was, was played upon and deceived, in pouring His wrath only upon the work of His hands. For the soul, or spiritual substance, which had been wounded in the flesh of the Saviour, extricated itself from this as from an unmeet and hateful vesture; and itself contributing to nailing it to the cross, triumphed by that very flesh over principalities and powers. It did not, however, remain naked, but clad in the subtler form which it had assumed in its baptismal second birth (*Philosoph.*, viii. 10). What is remarkable in this theory is, first, the admission of the reality of the terrestrial body, formed in the Virgin's womb, and then nailed to the cross. The *negation* is only of the *real* and permanent union of this body with the heavenly spirit which inhabits it. We shall, further, note the importance which it attaches to the Saviour's baptism, and the part played by water, as if an intermediate element between flesh and spirit. This may bear upon 1 John v. 8."

[This passage is from a *Dissertation—les Trois Témoins Célestes*, in a collection of religious and literary papers by French scholars (Tom. ii., Sept. 1868, pp. 388-392). The author, since deceased, was the Abbé Le Hir, M. Renan's instructor in Hebrew at Saint Sulpice, and pronounced by his pupil one of the first of European Hebraists and scientific theologians.]

DISCOURSE IV.

THE IMAGE OF ST. JOHN'S SOUL IN HIS EPISTLE.

"He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend."—PROV. xxii. 11.

ὁ θεμέλιος. . . . ὁ δεύτερος σάπφειρος.—APOC. xxi. 19.

"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."—1 JOHN v. 18-20.

MUCH has been said in the last few years of a series of subtle and delicate experiments in sound. Means have been devised of doing for the ear something analogous to that which glasses do for another sense, and of making the results palpable by a system of notation. We are told that every tree for instance, according to its foliage, its position, and the direction of the winds, has its own prevalent note or tone, which can be marked down, and its *timbre* made first visible by this notation, and then audible. So is it with the souls of the saints of God, and chiefly of the Apostles. Each has its own note, the prevalent key on which its peculiar music is set. Or we may employ another image which possibly has St. John's own authority. Each of the twelve has his own emblem among the twelve vast and precious foundation

stones which underlie the whole wall of the Church. St. John may thus differ from St. Peter, as the sapphire's azure differs from the jasper's strength and radiance. Each is beautiful, but with its own characteristic tint of beauty.[1]

We propose to examine the peculiarities of St. John's spiritual nature which may be traced in this Epistle. We try to form some conception of the key on which it is set, of the colour which it reflects in the light of heaven, of the image of a soul which it presents. In this attempt we cannot be deceived. St. John is so transparently honest; he takes such a deep, almost terribly severe view of truth. We find him using an expression about truth which is perhaps without a parallel in any other writer. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness we lie, and are not *doing the truth*."[2] The truth then for him is something co-extensive with our whole nature and whole life. Truth is not only to be *spoken*—that is but a fragmentary manifestation of it. It is to be *done*. It would have been for him the darkest of lies to have put forth a spiritual commentary on his Gospel which was not realised in himself. In the Epistle, no doubt, he uses the first person singular sparingly, modestly including himself in the simple *we* of Christian association. Yet we are as sure of the perfect accuracy of the picture of his soul, of the music in his heart which he makes visible and audible in his letter, as we are that he heard the voice of many waters, and saw the city coming down from God out of heaven; as sure, as if at the close of this fifth chapter he had added with the

[1] Apoc. xxi. 19, 20.

[2] 1 John i. 6, cf. John iii. 21. It is characteristic of St. John's style that *doing a lie* is found in Apoc. xxi. 27, xxii. 15.

triumphant emphasis of truth, in his simple and stately way, "I John heard these things and saw them."[1] He closes this letter with a threefold affirmation of certain primary postulates of the Christian life; of its *purity*,[2] of its *privilege*[3] of its *Presence*,[4]—"we know," "we know," "we know." In each case the plural might be exchanged for the singular. He says "*we* know," because he is sure "*I* know."

In studying the Epistles of St. John we may well ask what we see and hear therein of St. John's character, (1) as a sacred writer, (2) as a saintly soul.

I.

We consider first the indications in the Epistle of the Apostle's character as a sacred writer.

For help in this direction we do not turn with much satisfaction to essays or annotations pervaded by the modern spirit. The textual criticism of minute scholarship is no doubt much, but it is not all. Aorists are made for man, not man for the aorist. He indeed who has not traced every fibre of the sacred text with grammar and lexicon cannot quite honestly claim to be an *expositor* of it. But in the case of a book like Scripture this, after all, is but an important preliminary. The frigid subtlety of the commentator who always seems to have the questions for a divinity examination before his eyes, fails in the glow and elevation necessary to bring us into communion with the spirit of St. John. Led by such guides, the Apostle passes under our review as a third-rate writer of a magnificent language in decadence, not as the greatest of theologians

[1] Apoc. xxii. 8.
[2] 1 John v. 18.
[3] Ibid. 19.
[4] ἥκει, 'has come,—and is here."—Ibid. 20.

and masters of the spiritual life—with whatever defects of literary style, at once the Plato of the twelve in one region, and the Aristotle in the other; the first by his "lofty inspiration," the second by his "judicious utilitarianism." The deepest thought of the Church has been brooding for seventeen centuries over these pregnant and many-sided words, so many of which are the very words of Christ. To separate ourselves from this vast and beautiful commentary is to place ourselves out of the atmosphere in which we can best feel the influence of St. John.

Let us read Chrysostom's description of the style and thought of the author of the fourth Gospel. "The son of thunder, the loved of Christ, the pillar of the Churches, who leaned on Jesus' bosom, makes his entrance. He plays no drama, he covers his head with no mask. Yet he wears array of inimitable beauty. For he comes having his feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, and his loins girt, not with fleece dyed in purple, or bedropped with gold, but woven through and through with, and composed of, the truth itself. He will now appear before us, not dramatically, for with him there is no theatrical effect or fiction, but with his head bared he tells the bare truth. All these things he will speak with absolute accuracy, being the friend of the King Himself—aye, having the King speaking within him, and hearing all things from Him which He heareth from the Father; as He saith—'you I have called friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father, I have made known unto you. Wherefore, as if we all at once saw one stooping down from yonder heaven, and promising to tell us truly of things there, we should all flock to listen to him, so let us now dispose ourselves. For it is from

up there that this man speaks down to us. And the fisherman is not carried away by the whirling current of his own exuberant verbosity; but all that he utters is with the steadfast accuracy of truth, and as if he stood upon a rock he budges not. All time is his witness. Seest thou the boldness, and the great authority of his words! how he utters nothing by way of doubtful conjecture, but all demonstratively, as if passing sentence. Very lofty is this Apostle, and full of dogmas, and lingers over them more than over other things!"[1] This admirable passage, with its fresh and noble enthusiasm, nowhere reminds us of the glacial subtleties of the schools. It is the utterance of an expositor who spoke the language in which his master wrote, and breathed the same spiritual atmosphere. It is scarcely less true of the Epistle than of the Gospel of St. John.

Here also "he is full of dogmas," here again he is the theologian of the Church. But we are not to estimate the amount of dogma merely by the number of words in which it is expressed. Dogma, indeed, is not really composed of isolated texts—as pollen showered from conifers and germs scattered from mosses, accidentally brought together and compacted, are found upon chemical analysis to make up certain lumps of coal. It is primary and structural. The Divinity and Incarnation of Jesus pervade the First Epistle. Its whole structure is *Trinitarian*.[2] It contains two of

[1] *S. Joann. Chrysost., in Johan.*, Homil. iii., Tom. viii., 25, 36, Edit. Migne.

[2] Huther, while rejecting with all impartial critics the interpolation (1 John v. 7), writes thus: "when we embrace in one survey the contents of the Epistle as a whole, it is certainly easy to *adapt the conception* of the three Heavenly witnesses to one place after another in the document. But it does not follow that the mention of it just

the three great three-word dogmatic utterances of the New Testament about the nature of God (the first being in the fourth Gospel)—"God is Spirit," "God is light," "God is love." The chief dogmatic statements of the Atonement are found in these few chapters. "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin." "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." "He is the propitiation for the whole world." "God loved us, and sent His Son the propitiation for our sins." Where the Apostle passes on to deal with the spiritual life, he once more "is full of dogmas," *i.e.*, of eternal self-evidenced oracular sentences, spoken as if "down from heaven," or by one "whose foot is upon a rock,"—apparently identical propositions, all-inclusive, the dogmas of moral and spiritual life, as those upon the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, are of strictly theological truth. A further characteristic of St. John as a sacred writer in his Epistle is, that he appears to indicate throughout the moral and spiritual conditions which were necessary for receiving the Gospel with which he endowed the Church as the life of their life. These conditions are three. The first is *spirituality*, submission to the teaching of the Spirit, that they may know by it the meaning of the words of Jesus—the "anointing" of the Holy Ghost, which is ever "teaching all things" that He said.[1] The second condition is *purity*, at least, the continuing effort after self-purification which is incumbent even upon those who have received the great pardon.[2] This involves the following in life's daily

here would be in its right place." (*Handbuch über der drei Briefe des Johannes.* Dr. J. E. Huther.)

[1] 1 John ii. 20.

[2] 1 John i. 7, iii. 3.

walk of the One perfect life-walk,[1] the imitation of that which is supremely good,[2] "incarnated in an actual earthly career." All must be purity, or effort after purity, on the side of those who would read aright the Gospel of the immaculate Lamb of God. The third condition for such readers is love—*charity*. When he comes to deal fully with that great theme, the eagle of God wheels far out of sight. In the depths of His Eternal Being, "God is love."[3] Then this truth comes closer to us as believers. It stands completely and for ever *manifested* in its work *in us*,[4] because "God *hath sent*" (a mission in the past, but with abiding consequences)[5] "His Son, His only-begotten Son into the world, that we may live through Him." Yet again, he rises higher from the *manifestation* of this love to the eternal and essential principle in which it stands present for ever. "In this *is* the love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and once for all sent His Son a propitiation for our sins."[6] Then follows the manifestation of *our* love. "If God so loved us, we also are bound to love one another." Do we think it strange that St. John does not first draw the lesson—"if God so loved us, we also are bound to love God"? It has been in his heart all along, but he utters it in his own way, in the solemn pathetic question—"he that loveth

[1] 1 John ii. 6.

[2] "Imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good" (3 John 12). A comparison of this verse with John xxi. 24 would lead to the supposition that the writer of the letter is quoting the Gospel, and assumes an intimate knowledge of it on the part of Caius. See Discourse XVII. Part ii. of this vol.

[3] See note A at the end of this discourse.

[4] 1 John iv. 9.

[5] ἀπέσταλκεν.

[6] ἀπέστειλεν

not his brother whom he hath seen, God whom he hath not seen how can he love?"[1] Yet once more he sums up the creed in a few short words. "We have believed the love that God hath in us."[2] Truly and deeply has it been said that this creed of the heart, suffused with the softest tints and sweetest colours, goes to the root of all heresies upon the Incarnation, whether in St. John's time or later. That God should give up His Son by sending Him forth in humanity; that the Word made flesh should humble Himself to the death upon the cross, the Sinless offer Himself for sinners, this is what heresy cannot bring itself to understand. It is the excess of such love which makes it incredible. "We have believed the love" is the whole faith of a Christian man. It is St. John's creed in three words.[3]

Such are the chief characteristics of St. John as a sacred writer, which may be traced in his Epistle. These characteristics of the author imply corresponding characteristics of the man. He who states with such inevitable precision, with such noble and self-contained enthusiasm, the great dogmas of the Christian faith, the great laws of the Christian life, must himself have entirely believed them. He who insists upon these conditions in the readers of his Gospel, must himself have aimed at, and possessed, spirituality, purity, and love.

II.

We proceed to look at the First Epistle as a picture of the soul of its author.

(1) His was a life free from the dominion of wilful and habitual sin of any kind. "Whosover is born of

[1] 1 John iv. 20.
[2] 1 John iv. 16.
[3] πεπιστεύκαμεν τὴν ἀγάπην, 1 John iv. 16.

God doth not commit sin, and he cannot continue sinning." "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him." A man so entirely true, if conscious to himself of any reigning sin, dare not have deliberately written these words.

(2) But if St. John's was a life free from subjection to any form of the power of sin, he shows us that sanctity is not sinlessness, in language which it is alike unwise and unsafe to attempt to explain away. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves." "If we say that we have not sinned and are not sinners, we make Him a liar." But so long as we do not fall back into darkness, the blood of Jesus is ever purifying us from all sin. This he has written that the fulness of the Christian life may be realised in believers; that each step of their walk may follow the blessed footprints of the most holy life; that each successive act of a consecrated existence may be free from sin.[1] And yet, if any fail in some such single act,[2] if he swerve, for a moment, from the "true tenour" of the course which he is shaping, there is no reason to despair. Beautiful humility of this pure and lofty soul! How tenderly, with what lowly graciousness he places himself among those who have and who need an Advocate. "Mark John's humility," cries St. Augustine; "he says not '*ye* have,' nor 'ye have *me*,' nor even '*ye* have Christ.' But he puts forward Christ, not himself; and he says

[1] For the aor. conj. in this place as distinguished from the pres. conj. cf. John v. 20, 23, vi. 28, 29, 30. Professor Westcott's refined scholarship corrects the error of many commentators, "that the Apostle is simply warning us not to draw encouragement for license from the doctrine of forgiveness." The tense is decisive against this, the thought is of the single *act* not of the *state*.

[2] *ἐάν τις ἁμάρτῃ*, 1 John ii. 1.

'*we* have,' not '*ye* have,' thus placing himself in the rank of sinners."[1] Nor does St. John cover himself under the subterfuges by which men at different times have tried to get rid of a truth so humiliating to spiritual pride—sometimes by asserting that they so stand accepted in Christ that no sin is accounted to them for such; sometimes by pleading personal exemption for themselves as believers.

This Epistle stands alone in the New Testament in being addressed to two generations—one of which after conversion had grown old in a Christian atmosphere, whilst the other had been educated from the cradle under the influences of the Christian Church. It is therefore natural that such a letter should give prominence to the constant need of pardon. It certainly does not speak so much of the great initial pardon,[2] as of the continuing pardons needed by human frailty. In dwelling upon pardon once given, upon sanctification once begun, men are possibly apt to forget the pardon that is daily wanting, the purification that is never to cease. We are to walk daily from pardon to pardon, from purification to purification. Yesterday's surrender of self to Christ may grow ineffectual if it be not renewed to-day. This is sometimes said to be a humiliating view of the Christian life. Perhaps so—but it is the view of the Church, which places in its offices a daily confession of sin; of St. John in this Epistle; nay, of Him who teaches us, after our prayers for bread day by day, to pray for a daily forgiveness. This may be more humiliating, but it is safer teaching than that which proclaims a pardon to be appropriated in a moment for all sins past, present, and to come.

[1] *In Epist. Johann.*, Tract. I.

[2] 1 John ii. 12, is, of course, an important exception.

This humility may be traced incidentally in other regions of the Christian life. Thus he speaks of the possibility at least of his being among those who might "shrink with shame from Christ in His coming." He does not disdain to write as if, in hours of spiritual depression, there were tests by which he too might need to lull and "persuade his heart before God."[1]

(3) St. John again has a boundless faith in prayer. It is the key put into the child's hand by which he may let himself into the house, and come into his Father's presence when he will, at any hour of the night or day. And prayer made according to the conditions which God has laid down is never quite lost. The particular thing asked for may not indeed be given; but the substance of the request, the holier wish, the better purpose underlying its weakness and imperfection, never fails to be granted.[2]

(4) All but superficial readers must perceive that in the writings and character of St. John there is from time to time a tonic and wholesome *severity*. Art and modern literature have agreed to bestow upon the Apostle of love the features of a languid and inert tenderness. It is forgotten that St. John was the son of thunder; that he could once wish to bring down fire from heaven; and that the natural character is transfigured not inverted by grace. The Apostle uses great plainness of speech. For him a lie is a lie, and darkness is never courteously called light. He abhors and shudders at those heresies which rob the soul first of Christ, and then of God.[3] Those who undermine the

[1] 1 John iii. 19, 20.

[2] See Prof. Westcott's valuable note on 1 John v. 15. The very things literally asked for would be τὰ αἰτηθέντα, not τὰ αἰτήματα.

[3] 2 John 11.

Incarnation are for him not interesting and original speculators, but "lying prophets." He underlines his warnings against such men with his roughest and blackest pencil mark. "Whoso sayeth to him 'good speed' hath fellowship with his *works*, those wicked *works*"[1]—for such heresy is not simply one work, but a series of works. The schismatic prelate or pretender Diotrephes may "babble;" but his babblings are wicked words for all that, and are in truth the "works which he is doing."

The influence of every great Christian teacher lasts long beyond the day of his death. It is felt in a general tone and spirit, in a special appropriation of certain parts of the creed, in a peculiar method of the Christian life. This influence is very discernible in the remains of two disciples of St. John,[2] Ignatius and Polycarp. In writing to the Ephesians, Ignatius does not indeed explicitly refer to St. John's Epistle, as he does to that of St. Paul to the Ephesians. But he draws in a few bold lines a picture of the Christian life which is imbued with the very spirit of St. John. The character which the Apostle loved was quiet and real; we feel that his heart is not with "him that sayeth."[3] So Ignatius writes—"it is better to keep silence, and yet to *be*, than to talk and *not to be*. It is good to teach if 'he that sayeth doeth.' He who has gotten to himself the word of Jesus truly is able to hear the silence of Jesus also, so that he may *act* through that which he *speaks*, and *be known* through the things wherein he is *silent*. Let us therefore do all things as in His presence who dwelleth in us, that we may

[1] 3 John 10.
[2] *Mart. Ignat.*, i. *S. Hieron, de Script. Eccles.*, xvii.
[3] ὁ λέγων, 1 John ii. 4, 6, 9.

be His temple, and that He may be in us our God." This is the very spirit of St. John. We feel in it at once his severe common sense and his glorious mysticism.

We must add that the influence of St. John may be traced in matters which are often considered alien to his simple and spiritual piety. It seems that Episcopacy was consolidated and extended under his fostering care. The language of his disciple Ignatius, upon the necessity of union with the Episcopate is, after all conceivable deductions, of startling strength. A few decades could not possibly have removed Ignatius so far from the lines marked out to him by St. John as he must have advanced, if this teaching upon Church government was a new departure. And with this conception of Church government we must associate other matters also. The immediate successors of St. John, who had learned from his lips, held deep sacramental views. The Eucharist is "the bread of God, the bread of heaven, the bread of life, the flesh of Christ." Again Ignatius cries—"desire to use one Eucharist, for one is the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup unto oneness of His blood, one altar, as one Bishop, with the Presbytery and deacons."[2] Hints are not wanting that sweetness and life in public worship derived inspiration from the same quarter. The language of Ignatius is deeply tinged with his passion for *music*.[3] The beautiful story, how he set

[1] *Ignat. Epist. ad Ephes.*, xv., cf. 1 John ii. 14, iv. 9, 17, iii. 2.

[2] *S. Ignat. Epist. ad Philad.*, iv.; cf. *Epist. ad Smyrn.*, vii.; *Epist. ad Ephes.*, xx.

[3] The most elaborate passage in the Ignatian remains is probably this. "Let your Presbytery be fitted together harmoniously with the Bishop as chords with the cithara. Hereby in your symphonious love Jesus Christ is sung in concord. Taking your part man by man become one choir, that being harmoniously accordant in your like-

down, immediately after a vision, the melody to which he had heard the angels chanting, and caused it to be used in his church at Antioch, attests the impression of enthusiasm and care for sacred song which was associated with the memory of Ignatius.[1] Nor can we be surprised at these features of Ephesian Christianity, when we remember who was the founder of those Churches. He was the writer of *three* books. These books come to us with a continuous living interpretation of more than seventeen centuries of historical Christianity. From the fourth Gospel in large measure has arisen the sacramental instinct, from the Apocalypse the æsthetic instinct, which has been certainly exaggerated both in the East and West. The third and sixth chapters of St. John's Gospel permeate every baptismal and eucharistic office. Given an inspired book which represents the worship of the redeemed as one of perfect majesty and beauty, men may well in the presence of noble churches and stately liturgies, adopt the words of our great English Christian poet—

> "things which shed upon the outward frame
> Of worship glory and grace—which who shall blame
> That ever look'd to heaven for final rest?"

The third book in this group of writings supplies the sweet and quiet spirituality which is the foundation of every regenerate nature.

Such is the image of the soul which is presented to us by St. John himself. It is based upon a firm conviction of the nature of God, of the Divinity, the Incarnation,

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mindedness, having received in unity the chromatic music of God (χρῶμα Θεοῦ λαβόντες), ye may sing with one voice through Jesus Christ unto the Father."—*Epist. ad Ephes.*, iv. The same mage is differently applied, *Epist. ad Philad.*, i.

[1] The story is given by Socrates. (*Hist.*, vi. 8.)

the Atonement of our Lord. It is spiritual. It is pure, or being purified. The highest theological truth—"God is Love"—supremely *realised* in the Holy Trinity, supremely manifested in the sending forth of God's only Son, becomes the law of its common social life, made visible in gentle patience, in giving and forgiving.[1] Such a life will be free from the degradation of habitual sin. Yet it is at best an imperfect representation of the one perfect life.[2] It needs unceasing purification by the blood of Jesus, the continual advocacy of One who is sinless. Such a nature, however full of charity, will not be weakly indulgent to vital error or to ambitious schism;[3] for it knows the value of truth and unity. It feels the sweetness of a calm conscience, and of a simple belief in the efficacy of prayer. Over every such life—over all the grief that may be, all the temptation that must be—is the purifying hope of a great Advent, the ennobling assurance of a perfect victory, the knowledge that if we continue true to the principle of our new birth we are safe. And our safety is, not that we keep ourselves, but that we are kept by arms which are as soft as love, and as strong as eternity.[4]

These Epistles are full of instruction and of comfort for us, just because they are written in an atmosphere of the Church which, in one respect at least, resembles our own. There is in them no reference whatever to a continuance of miraculous powers, to raptures, or to extraordinary phenomena. All in them which is supernatural continues even to this day, in the possession of an inspired record, in sacramental grace, in the

[1] 1 John iv. 7, 12.
[2] 1 John ii. 6, 9, i. 7-10, ii. 1, 2.
[3] 1 John i. 7, ii. 2, iv. 3, 6; 2 John 7-11; 3 John 9, 10.
[4] 1 John iii. 19, v. 14, 15, iv. 2, 3, v. 4, 5, 18.

pardon and holiness, the peace and strength of believers. The apocryphal "Acts of John" contain some fragments of real beauty almost lost in questionable stories and prolix declamation. It is probably not literally true that when St. John in early life wished to make himself a home, his Lord said to him, "I have need of thee, John;" that that thrilling voice once came to him, wafted over the still darkened sea—"John, hadst thou not been Mine, I would have suffered thee to marry."[1] But the Epistle shows us much more effectually that he had a pure heart and virgin will. It is scarcely probable that the son of Zebedee ever drained a cup of hemlock with impunity; but he bore within him an effectual charm against the poison of sin.[2] We of this nineteenth century may smile when we read that he possessed the power of turning leaves into gold, of transmuting pebbles into jewels, of fusing shattered gems into one; but he carried with him wherever he went that most excellent gift of charity, which makes the commonest things of earth radiant with beauty.[3]

[1] These sentences do not go so far as the mischievous and anti-scriptural legend of later ascetic heretics, who marred the beauty and the purpose of the miracle at Cana, by asserting that John was the bridegroom, and that our Lord took him away from his bride. *Acta Johannis*, XXI. *Act. Apost. Apoc.*, Tisch., 275).

[2] This legend no doubt arose from the promise—"if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them" (Mark xvi. 18).

"Virus fidens sorbuit." Adam of St. Victor, *Seq.* XXXIII.

[3] "Aurum hic de frondibus,
Gemmas de silicibus,
Fractis de fragminibus,
Fecit firmas."—*Ibid.*

There is something interesting in the persistency of legends about St. John's power over gems, when connected with the passage, flashing all over with the light of precious stones, whose exquisite disposition is the wonder of lapidaries. Apoc. xxi. 18, 22.

He may not actually have praised his Master during his last hour in words which seem to us not quite unworthy even of such lips—"Thou art the only Lord, the root of immortality, the fountain of incorruption. Thou who madest our rough wild nature soft and quiet, who deliveredst me from the imagination of the moment, and didst keep me safe within the guard of that which abideth for ever." But such thoughts in life or death were never far from him for whom Christ was the Word and the Life; who knew that while "the world passeth away and the lust thereof, he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."[1]

May we so look upon this image of the Apostle's soul in his Epistle that we may reflect something of its brightness! May we be able to think, as we turn to this threefold assertion of knowledge—"*I* know something of the security of this keeping.[2] *I* know something of the sweetness of being in the Church, that isle of light surrounded by a darkened world.[3] *I* know something of the beauty of the perfect human life recorded by St. John, something of the continued presence of the Son of God, something of the new sense which He gives, that we may know Him who is the Very God.[4] Blessed exchange not to be vaunted loudly, but spoken reverently in our own hearts—the exchange of we, for I. There is much divinity in these pronouns.[5]

[1] See note B at the end of the Discourse

[2] 1 John v. 18.

[3] Ibid. v. 19.

[4] Ibid. v. 20.

[5] Said by Luther of Psalm xxii. 1

NOTES.

Note A.

1 John iv. 8, 9, 10. Modern theological schools of a Calvinistic bias have tended to overlook the conception of the nature of God as essential or substantive Love, and to consider love only as *manifested* in redemption. Socinianising interpreters understand the proposition to mean that God is simply and exclusively benevolent. (On the inadequacy of this, see Butler, *Anal.*, Part I., ch. iii., and Dissertation II. of the Nature of Virtue.) The highest Christian thought has ever recognised that the proposition 'God is Love' necessarily involves the august truth that God if *sole* is not *solitary*. ("Credimur et confitemur omnipotentem Trinitatem—unum Deum *solum* non *solitarium*." Concil. Tolet., vi. 1.) "Let it not be supposed," said St. Bernard, "that I here account Love as an attribute or accident, but as the Divine essence—no new doctrine, seeing that St. John saith 'God is love.' It may rightly be said both that *Love* is *God*, and that love is *the gift of God*. For Love gives love; the essential Love gives that which is accidental. When Love signifies the Giver, it is the name of His essence; when it signifies His gift, it is the name of a quality or attribute" (*S. Bernard., de dil. Deo*, xii.). "This is nobly said. God is love. Thus love is the eternal law whereby all things were created and are governed—wherewith He who is the law of all things is unto Himself His own law, and that a law of love—wherewith He bindeth His Trinity into Unity." (*Thomassin. Dogm. Theol.*, lib. iii., 23.)

Note B.

ἡ ῥίζα τῆς ἀθανασίας καὶ ἡ πηγὴ τῆς ἀφθαρσίας· ὁ τὴν ἔρημον καὶ ἀγριωθεῖσαν φύσιν ἡμῶν ἥρεμον καὶ ἡσύχιον ποιήσας, ὁ τῆς προσκαίρου φαντασίας ῥυσάμενός με καὶ εἰς τὴν ἀεὶ μένουσαν φρουρήσας (*Acta Johannis*, 21). These sentences are surely not without freshness and power. One other passage is worth translating, because it seems to have just that imaginative cast which makes the Greek Liturgies, like so much else that is Greek, stand midway between the East and West; and because it

apparently refers to St. John's Gospel. "Jesus! Thou who hast woven this coronal with Thy plaiting, who hast blended these many flowers into the flower of Thy presence, not blown through by the winds of any storm; Thou who hast scattered thickly abroad the seed of these words of Thine"—(*Acta Johannis*, 17).

PART II.

SOME GENERAL RULES FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. JOHN.

I. Subject Matter.

(1) THE *Epistle* is to be read through with constant reference to the *Gospel*. In what *precise form* the former is related to the latter (whether as a preface or as an appendix, as a spiritual commentary or an encyclical) critics may decide. But there is a vital and constant connection. The two documents not only touch each other in thought, but *interpenetrate* each other; and the Epistle is constantly *suggesting* questions which the Gospel only can answer, *e.g.*, 1 John i. 1, cf. John i. 1-14; 1 John v. 9, "witness of men," cf. John i. 15-36, 41, 45, 49, iii. 2, 27-36, iv. 29-42, vi. 68, 69, vii. 46, ix. 38, xi. 27, xviii. 38, xix. 5, 6, xx. 28.

(2) Such eloquence of *style* as St. John possesses is *real* rather than *verbal*. The interpreter must look not only at the words themselves, but at that which *precedes* and *follows*; above all he must fix his attention not only upon the *verbal expression* of the thought, but upon the *thought itself*. For the formal connecting link is not rarely omitted, and must be supplied by the devout and candid diligence of the reader. The "root

below the stream' can only be traced by our bending over the water until it becomes translucent to us.

E.g. 1 John i. 7, 8. Ver. 7, "the root below the stream" is a question of this kind, which naturally arises from reading ver. 6—"must it be said that the sons of light need a constant cleansing by the blood of Jesus, which implies a constant guilt"? Some such thought is the latent root of connection. The answer is supplied by the following verse. ["It is so" for] "if we say that we have no sin," etc. Cf. also iii. 16, 17, xiv. 8, 9, 10, 11, v. 3 (ad. fin.), 4.

II. Language.

1. *Tenses.*

In the New Testament generally tenses are employed very much in the same sense, and with the same general accuracy, as in other Greek authors. The so-called "enallage temporum," or perpetual and convenient Hebraism, has been proved by the greatest Hebrew scholars to be no Hebraism at all. But it is one of the simple secrets of St. John's quiet thoughtful power, that he uses tenses with the most rigorous precision.

(*a*) The *Present* of continuing uninterrupted action, *e.g.*, i. 8, ii. 6, iii. 7, 8, 9.

Hence the so-called *substantized* participle with article ὁ has in St. John the sense of the continuous and constitutive temper and conduct of any man, the principle of his moral and spiritual life—*e.g.*, ὁ λέγων, he who is ever vaunting, ii. 4; πᾶς ὁ μισῶν, every one the abiding principle of whose life is hatred, iii. 15; πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν, every one the abiding principle of whose life is love, iv. 7.

The Infin. Present is generally used to express an action now in course of performing or *continued* in itself

or in its results, or *frequently repeated—e.g.*, 1 John ii. 6, iii. 8, 9, v. 18. (Winer, *Gr. of N. T. Diction*, Part 3, xliv., 348.

(*b*) The *Aorist.*

This tense is generally used either of a thing occurring only once, which does not admit, or at least does not require, the notion of continuance and perpetuity; or of something which is brief and as it were only momentary in duration (Stallbaum, *Plat. Enthyd.*, p. 140). This limitation or isolation of the predicated action is most accurately indicated by the usual form of this tense in Greek. The aorist verb is encased between the augment ε- past time, and the adjunct σ- future time, *i.e.*, the act is fixed off within certain limits of previous and consequent time (Donaldson, *Gr. Gr.*, 427, B. 2). The aorist is used with most significant accuracy in the Epistle of St. John, *e.g.*, ii. 6, 11, 27, iv. 10, v. 18.

(*c*) The *Perfect.*

The Perfect denotes action absolutely past which lasts on in its effects. "The idea of completeness conveyed by the aorist must be distinguished from that of a state consequent on an act, which is the meaning of the perfect" (Donaldson, *Gr. Gr.*, 419). Careful observation of this principle is the key to some of the chief difficulties of the Epistle (iii. 9, v. 4, 18).

(2) The form of *accessional parallelism* is to be carefully noticed. The second member is always in advance of the first; and a third is occasionally introduced in advance of the second, denoting the highest point to which the thought is thrown up by the tide of thought, *e.g.*, 1 John ii. 4, 5, 6, v. 11, v. 27.

(3) The *preparatory touch* upon the chord which announces a theme to be amplified afterwards,—*e.g.*,

ii. 29, iii. 9—iv. 7, v. 3, 4; iii. 21—v. 14, ii. 20, iii. 24, iv. 3, v. 6, 8, ii. 13, 14, iv. 4—v. 4, 5.

(4) One secret of St. John's simple and solemn rhetoric consists in an *impressive change* in the order in which a leading word is used, *e.g.*, 1 John ii. 24, iv. 20.

These principles carefully applied will be the best commentary upon the letter of the Apostle, to whom not only when his subject is—

> "De Deo Deum verum
> Alpha et Omega, Patrem rerum";

but when he unfolds the principles of our spiritual life, we may apply Adam of St. Victor's powerful and untranslatable line,

> "Solers scribit idiota.

Ὃ ἦν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ὃ ἀκηκόαμεν, ὃ ἑωράκαμεν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν, ὃ ἐθεασάμεθα, καὶ αἱ χεῖρες ἡμῶν ἐψηλάφησαν περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς· καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἐφανερώθη, καὶ ἑωράκομεν, καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν, καὶ ἀπαγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον, ἥτις ἦν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα, καὶ ἐφανερώθη ἡμῖν· ὃ ἑωράκαμεν καὶ ἀκηκόαμεν, ἀπαγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν, ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς κοινωνίαν ἔχητε μεθ' ἡμῶν· καὶ ἡ κοινωνία δὲ ἡ ἡμετέρα μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ· καὶ ταῦτα γράφομεν ὑμῖν, ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ὑμῶν ᾖ πεπληρωμένη.

Quod fuit ab initio, quod audivimus, et vidimus oculis nostris, quod perspeximus, et manus nostræ tentaverunt, de Verbo vitæ; et vita manifestata est, et vidimus et testamur, et adnuntiamus vobis vitam æternam, quæ erat apud Patrem, et apparuit nobis: quod vidimus et audivimus, et adnuntiamus vobis, ut et vos societatem habeatis nobiscum, et societas nostra sit cum Patre, et Filio eius Iesu Christo. Et hæc scripsimus vobis ut gaudium nostrum sit plenum.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen *it*, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, tnat which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal *life*, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ: and these things we write, that our joy may be fulfilled.

That which was ever from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we gazed upon, and our hands handled — *I speak* concerning the Word who is the Life — and the Life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal *life*, as being that which was ever with the Father, and was manifested unto us: that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and that fellowship, which is our *fellowship*, is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be fulfilled

DISCOURSE I.

ANALYSIS AND THEORY OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

"Of the Word of Life."—1 JOHN i. 1.

IN the opening verses of this Epistle we have a sentence whose ample and prolonged prelude has but one parallel in St. John's writings.[1] It is, as an old divine says, "prefaced and brought in with more magnificent ceremony than any passage in Scripture."

The very emotion and enthusiasm with which it is written, and the sublimity of the exordium as a whole, tends to make the highest sense also the most natural sense. Of what or of whom does St. John speak in the phrase "concerning the Lord of Life," or "the Lord who is the Life"? The neuter "that which" is used for the masculine—"He who"—according to St. John's practice of employing the neuter comprehensively when a collective whole is to be expressed. The phrase "from the beginning," taken by itself, might no doubt be employed to signify the beginning of Christianity, or of the ministry of Christ. But even viewing it as entirely isolated from its context of language and circumstance, it has a greater claim to be looked upon as *from eternity* or *from the beginning of the creation.*

[1] See the noble and enthusiastic preface to the washing of the disciples' feet (John xiii. 1, 2, 3).

Other considerations are decisive in favour of the last interpretation.

(1) We have already adverted to the lofty and transcendental tone of the whole passage, elevating as it does each clause by the irresistible upward tendency of the whole sentence. The climax and resting place cannot stop short of the bosom of God. (2) But again, we must also bear in mind that the Epistle is everywhere to be read with the Gospel before us, and the language of the Epistle to be connected with that of the Gospel. The proœmium of the Epistle is the subjective version of the objective historical point of view which we find at the close of the preface to the Gospel. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us;" so St. John begins his sentence in the Gospel with a statement of an historical fact. But he proceeds, "and we delightedly beheld His glory;" that is a statement of the personal impression attested by his own consciousness and that of other witnesses. But let us note carefully that in the Epistle, which is in subjective relation to the Gospel, this process is exactly reversed. The Apostle begins with the personal impression; pauses to affirm the reality of the many proofs in the realm of fact of that which produced this impression through the senses upon the conceptions and emotions of those who were brought into contact with the Saviour; and then returns to the subjective impression from which he had originally started. (3) Much of the language in this passage is inconsistent with our understanding by the Word the first announcement of the Gospel preaching. One might of course speak of hearing the commencement of the Gospel message, but surely not of seeing and handling it. (4) It is a noteworthy fact that the Gospel

and the Apocalypse begin with the mention of the personal Word. This may well lead us to expect that Logos should be used in the same sense in the proœmium of the great Epistle by the same author.

We conclude then that when St. John here speaks of the Word of Life, he refers to something higher again than the preaching of life, and that he has in view both the manifestation of the life which has taken place in our humanity, and Him who is personally at once the Word and the Life.[1] The proœmium may be thus paraphrased. "That which in all its collective influence was from the beginning as understood by Moses, by Solomon, and Micah;[2] which we have first and above all heard in divinely human utterances, but which we have also seen with these very eyes; which we gazed upon with the full and entranced sight that delights in the object contemplated;[3] and which these hands handled reverentially at His bidding.[4] I speak all this concerning the Word who is also the Life."

Tracts and sheets are often printed in our day with anthologies of texts which are supposed to contain

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[1] The phrase probably means the Logos, the Personal "Word who is at once both the Word and the Life." For the double genitive, the second almost appositional to the first, conf. John ii. 21, xi. 13. This interpretation would seem to be that of Chrysostom. "If then the Word is the Life; and if this Christ who is at once the Word and the Life became flesh; then the Life became flesh." (*In Joan. Evang.* v.)

[2] Gen. i. 1; Prov. viii. 23; Micah v. 2.

[3] Cf. John vi. 36, 40. The word is applied by the angel to the disciples gazing on the Ascension, Acts i. 11. The Transfiguration may be here referred to. Such an incident as that in John vii. 37 attests a vivid delighted remembrance of the Saviour's very attitude.

[4] Luke xxiv. 39; John xx. 27.

the very essence of the Gospel. But the sweetest scents, it is said, are not distilled exclusively from flowers, for the flower is but an exhalation. The seeds, the leaf, the stem, the very bark should be macerated, because they contain the odoriferous substance in minute sacs. So the purest Christian doctrine is distilled, not only from a few exquisite flowers in a textual anthology, but from the whole substance, so to speak, of the message. Now it will be observed that at the beginning of the Epistle which accompanied the fourth Gospel, our attention is directed not to a sentiment, but to a fact and to a Person. In the collections of texts to which reference has been made, we should probably never find two brief passages which may not unjustly be considered to concentrate the essence of the scheme of salvation more nearly than any others. "The Word was made flesh." "Concerning the Word of Life (and that Life was once manifested, and we have seen and consequently are witnesses and announce to you from Him who sent us that Life, that eternal Life whose it is to have been in eternal relation with the Father, and manifested to us); That which we have seen and heard declare we from Him who sent us unto you, to the end that you too may have fellowship with us."

It would be disrespectful to the theologian of the New Testament to pass by the great dogmatic term never, so far as we are told, applied by our Lord to Himself, but with which St. John begins each of his three principal writings—THE WORD.[1]

Such mountains of erudition have been heaped over this term that it has become difficult to discover the

[1] Gospel i. 1-14; 1 John i. 1; Apoc. i. 9.

buried thought. The Apostle adopted a word which was already in use in various quarters simply because if, from the nature of the case necessarily inadequate,[1] it was yet more suitable than any other. He also, as profound ancient thinkers conceived, looked into the depths of the human mind, into the first principles of that which is the chief distinction of man from the lower creation—language. The human word, these thinkers taught, is twofold; inner and outer—now as the manifestation to the mind itself of unuttered thought, now as a part of language uttered to others. The word as signifying unuttered thought, the mould in which it exists in the mind, illustrates the eternal relation of the Father to the Son. The word as signifying uttered thought illustrates the relation as conveyed to man by the Incarnation. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten God which is in the bosom of the Father He interpreted Him." For the theologian of the Church Jesus is thus the Word; because He had His being from the Father in a way which presents some analogy to the human word, which is sometimes the inner vesture, sometimes the outward utterance of thought—sometimes the human thought in that language without which man cannot think, sometimes the speech whereby the speaker interprets it to others. Christ is the Word Whom out of the fulness of His thought and being the Father has

[1] "He hath a name written which *no one knoweth but He Himself*, —and His name is called THE WORD OF GOD" (Apoc. xix. 12, 13). Gibbons' adroit italics may here be noted. "The Logos, TAUGHT in the school of Alexandria BEFORE Christ 100—REVEALED to the Apostle St. John, ANNO DOMINI, 97" (*Decline and Fall*, ch. xxi.). Just so very probably—though whether St. John ever read a page of Philo or Plato we have no means of knowing

eternally inspoken and outspoken into personal existence.[1]

One too well knows that such teaching as this runs the risk of appearing uselessly subtle and technical, but its practical value will appear upon reflection. Because it gives us possession of the point of view from which St. John himself surveys, and from which he would have the Church contemplate, the history of the life of our Lord. And indeed for that life the theology of the Word, *i.e.*, of the Incarnation, is simply necessary.

For we must agree with M. Renan so far at least as this, that a great life, even as the world counts greatness, is an organic whole with an underlying vitalising idea; which must be construed as such, and cannot be adequately rendered by a mere narration of facts. Without this unifying principle the facts will be not only incoherent but inconsistent. There must be a point of view from which we can embrace the

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[1] The following table may be found useful:—

THE WORD IN ST. JOHN IS OPPOSED.

(A) To the Gnostic Word, created and temporal	as	(A) Uncreated and Eternal. "In the beginning was the Word."
(B) To the Platonic Word, ideal and abstract	as	(B) Personal and Divine. "The Word was God." "He"—"His."
(C) To the Judaistic and Philonic Word—the type and idea of God in creation	as	(C) Creative and First Cause. "All things were made by Him."
(D) To the Dualistic Word—limitedly and partially instrumental in creation .	as	(D) Unique and Universally Creative. "Without Him was not anything made that hath been made."
(E) To the Doketic Word—impalpable and visionary	as	(E) Real and Permanent. "The Word became flesh."

life as one. The great test here, as in art, is the formation of a living, consistent, unmutilated whole.[1]

Thus a general point of view (if we are to use modern language easily capable of being misunderstood we must say a theory) is wanted of the Person, the work, the character of Christ. The synoptical Evangelists had furnished the Church with the narrative of His earthly origin. St. John in his Gospel and Epistle, under the guidance of the Spirit, endowed it with the theory of His Person.

Other points of view have been adopted, from the heresies of the early ages to the speculations of our own. All but St. John's have failed to co-ordinate the elements of the problem. The earlier attempts essayed to read the history upon the assumption that He was merely human or merely divine. They tried in their weary round to unhumanise or undeify the God-Man, to degrade the perfect Deity, to mutilate the perfect Humanity—to present to the adoration of mankind a something neither entirely human nor entirely divine, but an impossible mixture of the two. The truth on these momentous subjects was fused under the fires of controversy. The last centuries have produced theories less subtle and metaphysical, but bolder and more blasphemous. Some have looked upon Him as a pretender or an enthusiast. But the depth and sobriety of His teaching upon ground where we are able to test it—the texture of circumstantial word and work which will bear to be inspected under any microscope or cross-examined by any prosecutor — have almost shamed such blasphemy into respectful silence. Others of later date admit with patronising admiration that

[1] *Vie de Jesus*, Int. 4.

the martyr of Calvary is a saint of transcendent excellence. But if He who called Himself Son of God was not much more than saint, He was something less. Indeed He would have been something of three characters; saint, visionary, pretender—at moments the Son of God in His elevated devotion, at other times condescending to something of the practice of the charlatan, His unparalleled presumption only excused by His unparalleled success.

Now the point of view taken by St. John is the only one which is possible or consistent—the only one which reconciles the humiliation and the glory recorded in the Gospels, which harmonises the otherwise insoluble contradictions that beset His Person and His work. One after another, to the question, "what think ye of Christ?" answers are attempted, sometimes angry, sometimes sorrowful, always confused. The frank respectful bewilderment of the better Socinianism, the gay brilliance of French romance, the heavy insolence of German criticism, have woven their revolting or perplexed christologies. The Church still points with a confidence, which only deepens as the ages pass, to the enunciation of the theory of the Saviour's Person by St. John—in his Gospel, "The Word was made flesh"—in his Epistle, "concerning the Word of Life."

DISCOURSE II.

ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL HISTORICAL NOT IDEOLOGICAL.

"That which we have heard."—1 JOHN i. 1.

OUR argument so far has been that St. John's Gospel is dominated by a central idea and by a theory which harmonises the great and many-sided life which it contains, and which is repeated again at the beginning of the Epistle in a form analogous to that in which it had been cast in the proœmium of the Gospel—allowing for the difference between a history and a document of a more subjective character moulded upon that history.

There is one objection to the accuracy, almost to the veracity, of a life written from such a theory or point of view. It may disdain to be shackled by the bondage of facts. It may become an essay in which possibilities and speculations are mistaken for actual events, and history is superseded by metaphysics. It may degenerate into a romance or prose-poem; if the subject is religious, into a mystic effusion. In the case of the fourth Gospel the cycles in which the narrative moves, the unveiling as of the progress of a drama, are thought by some to confirm the suspicion awakened by the point of view given in its proœmium, and in the opening of the Epistle. The Gospel, it is said, is *ideological*. To us it appears that those who have entered most deeply into the spirit of St. John will most deeply feel the

significance of the two words which we place at the head of this discourse—"which we have heard," "which we have seen with our very eyes," (which we contemplated with entranced gaze) "which our hands have handled."

More truly than any other, St. John could say of this letter in the words of an American poet:

"This is not a book—It is I I"

In one so true, so simple, so profound, so oracular, there is a special reason for this prolonged appeal to the senses, and for the place which is assigned to each. In the fact that *hearing* stands first, there is a reference to one characteristic of that Gospel to which the Epistle throughout refers. Beyond the synoptical Evangelists, St. John records the words of Jesus. The position which *hearing* holds in the sentence, above and prior to *sight* and *handling*, indicates the reverential estimation in which the Apostle held his Master's teaching.[1] The expression places us on solid historical ground, because it is a moral demonstration that one like St. John would not have dared to invent whole discourses and place them in the lips of Jesus. Thus in the "*we have heard*" there is a guarantee of the sincerity of the report of the discourses, which forms so large a proportion of the narrative that it practically guarantees the whole Gospel.

On this accusation of ideology against St. John's Gospel, let us make a further remark founded upon the Epistle.

[1] The appeal to the senses of *seeing* and *hearing* is a trait common to *all* the group of St. John's writings (John i. 14, xix. 35; 1 John i. 1, 2, iv. 14; Apoc. i. 2). The true reading (*κἀγὼ Ἰωάννης ὁ ἀκούων καὶ βλέπων ταῦτα*. Apoc. xxi. 8, where *hearing* stands before *seeing*) is indicative of John's style.

It is said that the Gospel systematically subordinates chronological order and historical sequence of facts to the necessity imposed by the theory of the Word which stands in the forefront of the Epistle and Gospel.

But mystic ideology, indifference to historical veracity as compared with adherence to a conception or theory, is absolutely inconsistent with that strong, simple, severe appeal to the validity of the historical principle of belief upon sufficient evidence which pervades St. John's writings. His Gospel is a tissue woven of many lines of evidence. "Witness" stands in almost every page of that Gospel, and indeed is found there nearly as often as in the whole of the rest of the New Testament. The word occurs *ten* times in five short verses of the Epistle.[1] There is no possibility of mistaking this prolixity of reiteration in a writer so simple and so sincere as our Apostle. The theologian is an historian. He has no intention of sacrificing history to dogma, and no necessity for doing so. His theory, and that alone, harmonises his facts. His facts have passed in the domain of human history, and have had that evidence of witness which proves that they did so.

A few of the stories of the earliest ages of Christianity have ever been repeated, and rightly so, as affording the most beautiful illustrations of St. John's character, the most simple and truthful idea of the impression left by his character and his work. His tender love for souls, his deathless desire to promote mutual love among his people, are enshrined in two anecdotes which the Church has never forgotten. It has scarcely been noticed that a tradition of not much

[1] 1 John v. 6-12.

later date (at least as old as Tertullian, born A.D. 90) credits St. John with a stern reverence for the accuracy of historical truth, and tells us what, in the estimation of those who were near him in time, the Apostle thought of the lawfulness of ideological religious romance. It was said that a presbyter of Asia Minor confessed that he was the author of certain apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla—probably the same strange but unquestionably very ancient document with the same title which is still preserved. The man's motive does not seem to have been selfish. His work was apparently the composition of an ardent and romantic nature passionately attracted by a saint so wonderful as St. Paul.[1] The tradition went on to assert that St. John without hesitation degraded this clerical romance-writer from his ministry. But the offence of the Asiatic presbyter would have been light indeed compared with that of

[1] That the "Acts of Paul and Thecla" are of high antiquity there can be no rational doubt. Tertullian writes: "But if those who read St. Paul's writings rashly use the example of Thecla, to give licence to women to teach and baptize publicly, let them know that a presbyter of Asia Minor, who put together that piece, crowning it with the authority of a Pauline title, convicted by his own confession of doing this from love of St. Paul, was deprived of his orders." (Tertullian, *De Baptismo*, xvii.) On which St. Jerome remarks—"We therefore relegate to the class of apocryphal writings, the *περιοδός* of Paul and Thecla, and the whole fable of the baptized lion. For how could it be that the sole real companion of the Apostle" (Luke) "while so well acquainted with the rest of the history, should have known nothing of this? And further, Tertullian, who touched so nearly upon those times, records that a certain presbyter in Asia Minor, convicted before *John* of being the author of that book, and confessing that as a *σπουδαστής* of the Apostle Paul he had done this from loving devotion to that great memory, was deposed from his ministry." (St. Hieron., *de Script Eccles.*, VII.) See the mass of authority for the antiquity of this document, which gives a considerable degree of probability to the statement about St. John, in *Acta Apost. Apoc.*, Edit. Tischendorf.—**Proleg. xxi., xxvi.**

the mendacious Evangelist, who could have deliberately fabricated discourses and narrated miracles which he dared to attribute to the Incarnate Son of God. The guilt of publishing to the Church apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla would have paled before the crimson sin of forging a Gospel.

These considerations upon St. John's prolonged and circumstantial claim to personal acquaintance with the Word made flesh, confirmed by every avenue of communication between man and man—and first in order by the hearing of that sweet yet awful teaching—point to the fourth Gospel again and again. And the simple assertion—"that which we have heard"—accounts for one characteristic of the fourth Gospel which would otherwise be a perplexing enigma—its *dramatic* vividness and consistency.

This dramatic truth of St. John's narrative, manifested in various developments, deserves careful consideration. There are three notes in the fourth Gospel which indicate either a consummate dramatic instinct or a most faithful record. (1) The delineation of *individual characters*. The Evangelist tells us with no unmeaning distinction, that Jesus "knew all men, and knew what is in man!"[1] For some persons take an apparently profound view of human nature in the abstract. They pass for being sages so long as they confine themselves to sounding generalizations, but they are convicted on the field of life and experience. They claim to know what is in man; but they know it vaguely, as one might be in possession of the outlines of a map, yet totally ignorant of most places within its limits. Others, who mostly affect to be keen men of the world, refrain from

[1] John iii. 24, 25.

generalizations; but they have an insight, which at times is startling, into the characters of the individual men who cross their path. There is a sense in which they superficially seem to know all men, but their knowledge after all is capricious and limited. One class affects to know men, but does not even affect to know man; the other class knows something about man, but is lost in the infinite variety of the world of real men. Our Lord knew both—both the abstract ultimate principles of human nature and the subtle distinctions which mark off every human character from every other. Of this peculiar knowledge he who was brought into the most intimate communion with the Great Teacher was made in some degree a partaker in the course of His earthly ministry. With how few touches yet how clearly are delineated the Baptist, Nathanael, the Samaritan woman, the blind man, Philip, Thomas, Martha and Mary, Pilate! (2) More particularly the *appropriateness* and *consistency* of the language used by the various persons introduced in the narrative is, in the case of a writer like St. John, a multiplied proof of historical veracity.[1] For instance, of St. Thomas

[1] Those who are perplexed by the identity in style and turn of language between the Epistle and the discourse of our Lord in St. John's Gospel may be referred to the writer's remarks in *The Speaker's Commentary* (N. T. iv. 286-89). It should be added that the Epp. to the Seven Churches (Apoc. ii., iii.)—especially to Sardis—interweave sayings of Jesus recorded by the Synoptical evangelists (*e.g.*, "as a thief," Apoc. iii. 3, cf. Mark xiii. 37; "book of life," Apoc. iii. 5, cf. Luke x. 20; "confessing a name," Apoc. iii. 5, cf. Matt. x. 32; "He that hath an ear," Apoc. iii. 6, 13, 22, and ii. 7, 11, 17, 29. This phrase, found in each of the seven Epp., occurs nowhere in the fourth Gospel, but constantly in the Synoptics. Cf. Matt. x. 27, xi. 15, xiii. 19, 43; Mark iv. 9, 23, vii. 16; Luke viii. 8, xiv. 35; cf. also "giving power over the nations" (Apoc. ii. 26—with the conception in Matt. xix. 28; Luke xxii. 29 30. If the author of the

only one single sentence, containing seven words, is preserved,[1] outside the memorable narrative in the twentieth chapter; yet how unmistakably does that brief sentence indicate the same character—tender, impetuous, loving, yet ever inclined to take the darker view of things because from the very excess of its affection it cannot believe in that which it most desires, and demands accumulated and convincing proof of its own happiness. Further, the language of our Lord which St. John preserves is both morally and intellectually a marvellous witness to the proof of his assertion here in the outset of his Epistle.

This may be exemplified by an illustration from modern literature. Victor Hugo, in his *Légende des Siècles*, has in one passage only placed in our Lord's lips a few words which are not found in the Evangelist.[2] Every one will at once feel that these words ring hollow, that there is in them something exaggerated and factitious—and *that* although the dramatist had the advantage of having a *type* of style already constructed for him. People talk as if the representation in detail of a perfect character were a comparatively easy performance. Yet every such representation shows some flaw when

fourth Gospel was also the author of the Apocalypse, his choice of the style which he attributes to the Saviour was at least decided by no lack of knowledge of the Synoptical type of expression, and by no incapacity to use it with freedom and power.

[1] John xi. 16.

[2] "Qui me suit, aux anges est pareil.
Quand un homme a marché tout le jour au soleil
Dans un chemin sans puits et sans hôtellerie,
S'il ne croit pas quand vient le soir il pleure, il crie,
Il est las; sur la terre il tombe haletant.
S'il croit en moi, qu'il prie, il peut au même instant.
Continuer sa route avec des forces triples."
(*Le Christ et le Tombeau.*) Tom. i. 44.

closely inspected. For instance, a character in which Shakespeare so evidently delighted as Buckingham, whose end is so noble and martyr-like, is thus described, when on his trial, by a sympathising witness:

> "'How did he bear himself?'
> 'When he was bought again to the bar, to hear,
> His knell rung out, his judgment, he was struck
> With such an agony, he sweat extremely,
> And something spoke in choler, *ill and hasty;*
> But he fell to himself again, and sweetly
> In all the rest show'd a most noble patience.'"[1]

Our argument comes to this point. Here is one man of all but the highest rank in dramatic genius, who utterly fails to invent even one sentence which could possibly be taken for an utterance of our Lord. Here is another, the most transcendent in the same order whom the human race has ever known, who tacitly confesses the impossibility of representing a character which shall be "one entire and perfect chrysolite," without speck or flaw. Take yet another instance. Sir Walter Scott appeals for "the fair licence due to the author of a fictitious composition;" and admits that he "cannot pretend to the observation of complete accuracy even in outward costume, much less in the more important points of language and manners."[2] But St. John was evidently a man of no such pretensions as these kings of the human imagination—no Scott or Victor Hugo, much less a Shakespeare. How then

[1] King Henry VIII., Act 2, Sc. 1. Contrast again our Lord before the council with St. Paul before that tribunal. In the case of one of the chief of saints there is the touch of human infirmity, the "something spoken in choler, ill and hasty," the angry and contemptuous "whited wall"—the confession of hasty inconsiderateness (οὐκ ᾔδειν—ὅτι ἐστὶν ἀρχιερεύς) which led to a violation of a precept of the law (Exod. xxii. 28).

[2] Preface to *Ivanhoe*.

—except on the assumption of his being a faithful reporter, of his recording words actually spoken, and witnessing incidents which he had seen with his very eyes and contemplated with loving and admiring reverence—can we account for his having given us long successions of sentences, continuous discourses in which we trace a certain unity and adaptation;[1] and a character which stands alone among all recorded in history or conceived in fiction, by presenting to us an excellence faultless in every detail? We assert that the one answer to this question is boldly given us by St. John in the forefront of his Epistle—"That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes—concerning the Word who is the Life—declare we unto you."

St. John's mode of writing history may profitably be contrasted with that of one who in his own line was a great master, as it has been ably criticised by a distinguished statesman. Voltaire's historical masterpiece is a portion of the life of Maria Theresa, which is un-

[1] *How* the great sayings were accurately collected has not been the question before us in this discourse. But it presents little difficulty. It is not absurd to suppose (if we are required to postulate no divine assistance) that notes may have been taken in some form by certain members of the company of disciples. The profoundly thoughtful remark of Irenæus upon his own unfailing recollection of early lessons from Polycarp, would apply with indefinitely greater force to such a pupil as John, of such a teacher as Jesus. "I can thoroughly recollect things so far back better than those which have lately occurred; for lessons which have grown with us since boyhood are compacted into a unity with the very soul itself." (τῇ ψυχῇ ἐνοῦνται αὐτῇ) *Euseb.*, v. 29. But above all, whatever subordinate agency may have been employed in the preservation of those precious words, every Christian reverently acknowledges the fulfilment of the Saviour's promise—"The Comforter, the Holy Ghost, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance ***whatsoever I have said unto you***" (John xiv. 26).

questionably written from a partly ideological point of view. For, those who have patience to go back to the "sources," and to compare Voltaire's narrative with them, will see the process by which a literary master has produced his effect. The writer works as if he were composing a classical tragedy restricted to the unities of time and place. The three days of the coronation and of the successive votes are brought into one effect, of which we are made to feel that it is due to a magic inspiration of Maria Theresa. Yet, as the great historical critic to whom we refer proceeds to demonstrate, a different charm, very much more real because it comes from truth, may be found in literal historical accuracy without this academic rouge. Writers more conscientious than Voltaire would not have assumed that Maria Theresa was degraded by a husband who was inferior to her. They would not have substituted some pretty and pretentious phrases for the genuine emotion not quite veiled under the official Latin of the Queen. "However high a thing art may be, reality, truth, which is the work of God, is higher!"[1] It is this conviction, this entire intense adhesion to truth, this childlike ingenuousness which has made St. John as an historian attain the higher region which is usually reached by genius alone—which has given us narratives and passages whose ideal beauty or awe is so transcendent or solemn, whose pictorial grandeur or pathos is so inexhaustible, whose philosophical depth is so unfathomable.[2]

He stands with spell-bound delight before his work

[1] Duc de Broglie. *Revue des deux Mondes.* 15 Jan. 1882. Coxe, *House of Austria*, vol. iii., chap. xcix., p. 415, sqq.

[2] John xiii. 30, xi. 35, xix. 5, xxii. 29–35.

without the disappointment which ever attends upon men of genius; because that work is not drawn from himself, because he can say three words—which we have *heard*, which we have *seen* with our eyes, which we have *gazed* upon.

NOTES.

Ch. i. 2, 4.

Ver. 2. ***Us, we.***] "The nominative plural first person is not always of *majesty* but often of *modesty*, when we share our privilege and dignity with others" (*Grotius*). The context must decide what shade of meaning is to be read into the text, *e.g.*, here it is the *we* of modesty, as also (very tenderly and beautifully) in ii. 1, 2, v. 5. It rises into *majesty* with the majestic, "we announce."

Ver. 4. "*These things.*"] Not even the *fellowship* with the Church and with the Father and with the Son is so much in the Apostle's intention here as the record in the *Gospel*.

We write unto you.] In days when men's minds were still freshly full of the privilege of free access to the Scriptures, these words suggested (and they naturally enough do so still) the use of the written word, and the guilt of the Church or of individuals in neglecting it. This has been well expressed by an old divine. - "That which is able to give us full joy must not be deficient in anything which conduceth to our happiness; but the holy Scriptures give fulness of joy, and therefore the way to happiness is perfectly laid down in them. The *major* of this syllogism is so clear, that it needs no probation; for who can or will deny, that full joy is only to be had in a state of bliss? The *minor* is plain from this scripture, and may thus be drawn forth. That which the Apostles aimed at in, may doubtless be attained to by, their writings; for they being inspired of God, it is no other than the end that God purposed in inspiring which they had in writing; and either God Himself is wanting in the means which He hath designed for this end, or these writings contain in them what will yield fulness of joy, and to that end bring us to a state of blessedness.

"How odious is the profaneness of those Christians who

neglect the holy Scriptures, and give themselves to reading other books! How many precious hours do many spend, and that not only on work days, but holy days, in foolish romances, fabulous histories, lascivious poems! And why this, but that they may be cheered and delighted, when as full joy is only to be had in these holy books. Alas, the joy you find in those writings is perhaps pernicious, such as tickleth your lust, and promoteth contemplative wickedness. At the best it is but vain, such as only pleaseth the fancy and affecteth the wit; whereas these holy writings (to use David's expression, Psalm xix. 8), are 'right, rejoicing the heart.' Again, are there not many who more set by Plutarch's morals, Seneca's epistles, and suchlike books, than they do by the holy Scriptures? It is true, there are excellent truths in those moral writings of the heathen, but yet they are far short of these sacred books. Those may comfort against outward trouble, but not against inward fears; they may rejoice the mind, but cannot quiet the conscience; they may kindle some flashy sparkles of joy, but they cannot warm the soul with a lasting fire of solid consolation. And truly, if ever God give you a spiritual ear to judge of things aright, you will then acknowledge there are no bells like to those of Aaron, no harp like to that of David, no trumpet like to that of Isaiah, no pipes like to those of the Apostles." (*First Epistle of St. John, unfolded and applied* by Nathaniel Hardy, D.D., Dean of Rochester, about 1660.)

SECTION II.

GREEK.	LATIN.	AUTHORISED VERSION.	REVISED VERSION.	ANOTHER VERSION.
Καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγγελία ἣν ἀκηκόαμεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀναγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν, ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς φῶς ἐστιν, καὶ σκοτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεμία. ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' αὐτοῦ. καὶ ἐν τῷ σκότει περιπατῶμεν, ψευδόμεθα, καὶ οὐ ποιοῦμεν τὴν ἀλήθειαν· ἐὰν δὲ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ περιπατῶμεν, ὡς αὐτός ἐστιν ἐν τῷ φωτί, κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' ἀλλήλων, καὶ τὸ αἷμα Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας. Ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔχομεν, ἑαυτοὺς πλανῶμεν, καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια ἐν ἡμῖν οὐκ ἔστιν. ἐὰν ὁμολογῶμεν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν, πιστός ἐστι καὶ δίκαιος, ἵνα ἀφῇ ἡμῖν τὰς ἁμαρτίας, καὶ καθαρίσῃ	Et hæc est adnuntiatio quam audivimus ab eo, et adnuntiamus vobis, quoniam Deus lux est, et tenebræ in eo non sunt ullæ. Si dixerimus quoniam societatem habemus cum eo et in tenebris ambulamus, mentimur, et non facimus veritatem: si autem in luce ambulamus sicut et ipse est in luce, societatem habemus ad invicem, et sanguis Iesu Christi, Filii eius, mundat nos omni peccato. Si dixerimus quoniam peccatum non habemus, ipsi nos seducimus, et veritas in nobis non est. Si confiteamur peccata nostra, fidelis et justus est, ut remittat nobis peccata nostra, et emundet nos ab omni iniqui-	This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned,	And this is the message which we have heard from Him, and announce unto you, that God is light, and *in* Him is *no darkness* at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned,	And this is the message which we have heard from Him and are announcing unto you that God is light, and darkness in Him there is none. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and are walking in the darkness, we lie and are not doing the truth; but if we walk in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus His Son is purifying us from all sin. If we say that we have not sin, we mislead ourselves and the truth in us is not. If we confess our sins He is faithful and righteous that He may forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteous-

ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἀδικίας. ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι οὐχ ἡμαρτήκαμεν, ψεύστην ποιοῦμεν αὐτόν, καὶ ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν.

Τεκνία μου, ταῦτα γράφω ὑμῖν, ἵνα μὴ ἁμάρτητε· καὶ ἐάν τις ἁμάρτῃ, παράκλητον ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα, Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν δίκαιον· καὶ αὐτὸς ἱλασμός ἐστι περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν· οὐ περὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων δὲ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου.

tate. Si dixerimus quoniam non peccavimus, mendacem faciemus eum, et verbum eius in nobis non est. Filioli mei, hæc scribo vobis, ut non peccetis: sed et si quis peccavetit advocatum habemus apud Patrem, Iesum Christum iustum et ipse est propitiatio pro peccatis nostris, non pro nostris autem tantum sed etiam pro totius mundi.

we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world.

we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My *little* children, these things write I unto you, that ye may not sin. And if *any man sin*, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.

ness. If we say that we have not sinned a liar we are making Him, and His word is not in us. My children these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And yet if any may have sinned, an Advocate have we with the Father Jesus Christ *who is* righteous: and He is propitiation for our sins; yea, and not for ours only but also for the whole world

DISCOURSE III.

EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT.

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."—1 JOHN ii. 1, 2.

OF the Incarnation of the Word, of the whole previous strain of solemn oracular annunciation, there are two great objects. Rightly understood it at once stimulates and soothes; it supplies inducements to holiness, and yet quiets the accusing heart. (1) It urges to a pervading holiness in each recurring circumstance of life.[1] "That ye may not sin" is the bold universal language of the morality of God. Men only understand moral teaching when it comes with a series of monographs on the virtues, sobriety, chastity, and the rest. Christianity does not overlook these, but it comes first with all-inclusive principles. The morality of man is like the sculptor working line by line and part by part, partially and successively. The morality of God is like nature, and works in every part of the flower and tree with a sort of ubiquitous presence. "These things write we unto you." No dead letter—a living spirit infuses the lines; there is a deathless principle behind the words which will vitalize and

[1] Observe in the Greek the *μὴ ἁμάρτητε*, which refers to single acts not to a continuous state—"that ye *may not sin*."

permeate all isolated relations and developments of conduct. "These things write we unto you that ye may not sin."

(2) But further, this announcement also soothes. There may be isolated acts of sin against the whole tenor of the higher and nobler life. There may be, God forbid!—but it may be—some glaring act of inconsistency. In this case the Apostle uses a form of expression which includes himself, "we have," and yet points to Christ, not to himself, "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ"—and that in view of His being One who is perfectly and simply righteous; "and He is the propitiation for our sins."

Then, as if suddenly fired by a great thought, St. John's view broadens over the whole world beyond the limits of the comparatively little group of believers whom his words at that time could reach. The Incarnation and Atonement have been before his soul. The Catholic Church is the correlative of the first, humanity of the second. The Paraclete whom he beheld is ever in relation with, ever turned towards the Father.[1] His propitiation *is*, and He *is* it. It *was* not simply a fact in history which works on with unexhaustible force. As the Advocate is ever turned towards the Father, so the propitiation lives on with unexhausted life. His intercession is not verbal, temporary, interrupted. The Church, in her best days, never prayed—"Jesus, pray for me!" It is interpretative, continuous, unbroken. In time it is eternally valid, eternally present. In

[1] 1 John ii. 2. As a translation, "towards" seems too pedantic; yet πρός is *ad-versus* rather than *apud*, and with the accusative signifies either the direction of motion, or the relation between two objects. (Donaldson, *Greek Grammar*, 524). We may fittingly call the preposition here πρός *pictorial*.

space it extends as far as human need, and therefore takes in every place. "Not for our sins only," but for men universally, "for the whole world." [1]

It is implied then in this passage, that Christ was *intended* as a propitiation for the whole world; and that He is *fitted* for satisfying all human wants.

(1) Christ was intended for the whole world. Let us see the Divine intention in one incident of the crucifixion. In that are mingling lines of glory and of humiliation. The King of humanity appears with a scarlet camp-mantle flung contemptuously over His shoulders; but to the eye of faith it is the purple of empire. He is crowned with the acanthus wreath; but the wreath of mockery is the royalty of our race. He is crucified between two thieves; but His cross is a Judgment-Throne, and at His right hand and His left are the two separated worlds of belief and unbelief. All the Evangelists tell us that a superscription, a title of accusation, was written over His cross; two of them add that it was written over Him "in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew" (or in Hebrew, Greek, Latin). In Hebrew—the sacred tongue of patriarchs and seers, of the nation all whose members were in idea and destination those of whom God said, "My prophets." In Greek—the "musical and golden tongue which gave a soul to the objects of sense and a body to the abstractions of philosophy;" the language of a

[1] The various meanings of κόσμος are fully traced below on 1 John ii. 17. There is one point in which the notions of κόσμος and αἰών intersect. But they may be thus distinguished. The first signifies the world projected in *space*, the second in *time*. The supposition that the form of expression at the close of our verse is elliptical, and to be filled up by the repetition of "for the sins of the whole world" "is not justified by usage, and weakens the force of the passage." (*Epistles of St. John*, Westcott, p. 44.)

people whose mission it was to give a principle of fermentation to all races of mankind, susceptible of those subtle and largely indefinable influences which are called collectively Progress. In Latin—the dialect of a people originally the strongest of all the sons of men. The three languages represent the three races and their ideas—revelation, art, literature; progress, war, and jurisprudence. Beneath the title is the thorn-crowned head of the ideal King of humanity.

Wherever these three tendencies of the human race exist, wherever annunciation can be made in human language, wherever there is a heart to sin, a tongue to speak, an eye to read, the cross has a message. The superscription, "written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin," is the historical symbol translated into its dogmatic form by St. John—"He is the propitiation[1] for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world."

[1] As to doctrine. There are three "grand circles" or "families of images" whereby Scripture approaches from different quarters, or surveys from different sides, the benefits of our Lord's meritorious death. These are represented by, are summed up in, three words—ἀπολύτρωσις, καταλλαγή, ἱλασμός. The last is found in the text and in iv. 10; nowhere else precisely in that form in the New Testament. "Ιλασμός (expiation or propitiation) and ἀπολύτρωσις (redemption) is fundamentally one single benefit, *i.e.*, the restitution of the lost sinner. Ἀπολύτρωσις is in respect of *enemies*; καταλλαγή in respect of *God*. And here again the words ἱλασμ. and καταλλ. differ. *Propitiation* takes away offences as against *God*. *Reconciliation* has two sides. It takes away (*a*) God's *indignation* against *us*, 2 Cor. v. 18, 19; (*b*) *our alienation* from *God*, 2 Cor. v. 20." (Bengel on Rom. iii. 24. Whoever would rightly understand all that we can know on these great words must study *New Testament Synonyms, Archbp. Trench*, pp. 276-82.)

DISCOURSE IV.

MISSIONARY APPLICATION OF THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT.

"For the whole world."—1 John ii. 2.

LET us now consider the universal and ineradicable wants of man.

Such a consideration is substantially unaffected by speculation as to the theory of man's origin. Whether the first men are to be looked for by the banks of some icy river feebly shaping their arrowheads of flint, or in godlike and glorious progenitors beside the streams of Eden; whether our ancestors were the result of an inconceivably ancient evolution, or called into existence by a creative act, or sprung from some lower creature elevated in the fulness of time by a majestic inspiration, —at least, as a matter of fact, man has other and deeper wants than those of the back and stomach. Man as he is has five spiritual instincts. *How* they came to be there, let it be repeated, is not the question. It is the fact of their existence, not the mode of their *genesis*, with which we are now concerned.

(1) There is almost, if not quite, without exception the instinct which may be generally described as the instinct of the Divine. In the wonderful address where St. Paul so fully recognises the influence of geographical circumstance and of climate, he speaks of God "having made out of one blood every nation of men to seek

after their Lord, if haply at least" (as might be expected) "they would feel for Him"[1]—like men in darkness groping towards the light. (2) There is the instinct of prayer, the "testimony of the soul naturally Christian." The little child at our knees meets us half way in the first touching lessons in the science of prayer. In danger, when the vessel seems to be sinking in a storm, it is ever as it was in the days of Jonah, when "the mariners cried every man unto his God."[2] (3) There is the instinct of immortality, the desire that our conscious existence should continue beyond death.

> "Who would lose,
> Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
> These thoughts that wander through eternity,
> To perish rather swallow'd up and lost
> In the wide womb of uncreated night?"

(4) There is the instinct of morality, call it conscience or what we will. The lowest, most sordid, most materialised languages are never quite without witness to this nobler instinct. Though such languages have lien among the pots, yet their wings are as the wings of a dove that is covered with silver wings and her feathers like gold. The most impoverished vocabularies have words of moral judgment, "good" or "bad;" of praise or blame, "truth and lie;" above all, those august words which recognise a law paramount to all other laws, "I must," "I ought." (5) There is the instinct of *sacrifice*, which, if not absolutely universal, is at least all but so—the sense of impurity and unworthiness, which says by the very fact of bringing a victim. "I am not worthy to come alone; may my guilt be transferred to the representative which I immolate."

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[1] Acts xvii. 27. [2] Jonah i. 5.

(1) Thus then man seeks after God. Philosophy unaided does not succeed in finding Him. The theistic systems marshal their syllogisms; they prove, but do not convince. The pantheistic systems glitter before man's eye; but when he grasps them in his feverish hand, and brushes off the mystic gold dust from the moth's wings, a death's-head mocks him. St. John has found the essence of the whole question stripped from it all its plausible disguises, and characterises Mahommedan and Judaistic Deism in a few words. Nay, the philosophical deism of Christian countries comes within the scope of his terrible proposition. "Deo erexit Voltairius," was the philosopher's inscription over the porch of a church; but Voltaire had not in any true sense a God to whom he could dedicate it. For St. John tells us—"whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father."[1] Other words there are in his Second Epistle whose full import seems to have been generally overlooked, but which are of solemn significance to those who go out from the camp of Christianity with the idea of finding a more refined morality and a more ethereal spiritualism. "Whosoever goeth forward and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ"; whosoever writes progress on his standard, and goes forward beyond the lines of Christ, loses natural as well as supernatural religion—"he hath not God."[2] (2) Man wants to pray. Poor disinherited child, what master of requests shall he find? Who shall interpret his broken language to God, God's infinite language to him? (3) Man yearns for the assurance of immortal life. This can best be given by one specimen of manhood risen from the

[1] 1 John ii. 28. [2] 2 John 9.

grave, one traveller come back from the undiscovered bourne with the breath of eternity on His cheek and its light in His eye; one like Jonah, Himself the living sign and proof that He has been down in the great deeps. (4) Man needs a morality to instruct and elevate conscience. Such a morality must possess these characteristics. It must be *authoritative*, resting upon an absolute will; its teacher must say, not "I think," or "I conclude," but—"verily, verily I say unto you." It must be *unmixed* with baser and more questionable elements. It must be *pervasive*, laying the strong grasp of its purity on the whole domain of thought and feeling as well as of action. It must be *exemplified*. It must present to us a series of pictures, of object-lessons in which we may see it illustrated. Finally, this morality must be *spiritual*. It must come to man, not like the Jewish Talmud with its seventy thousand precepts which few indeed can ever learn, but with a compendious and condensed, yet all-embracing brevity—with words that are spirit and life. (5) As man knows duty more thoroughly, the instinct of sacrifice will speak with an ever-increasing intensity. "My heart is overwhelmed by the infinite purity of this law. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I; let me find God and be reconciled to Him." When the old Latin spoke of *propitiation* he thought of something which brought *near* (*prope*); his inner thought was—"let God come near to me, that I may be near to God." These five ultimate spiritual wants, these five ineradicable spiritual instincts, *He* must meet, of whom a master of spiritual truth like St. John can say with his plenitude of insight—"He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world."

We shall better understand the fulness of St. John's

thought if we proceed to consider that this fitness in Christ for meeting the spiritual wants of humanity is *exclusive*.

Three great religions of the world are more or less *Missionary*. Hinduism, which embraces at least a hundred and ninety millions of souls, is certainly not in any sense missionary. For Hinduism transplanted from its ancient shrines and local superstitions dies like a flower without roots. But Judaism at times has strung itself to a kind of exertion almost inconsistent with its leading idea. The very word "proselyte" attests the unnatural fervour to which it had worked itself up in our Lord's time. The Pharisee was a missionary sent out by pride and consecrated by self-will. "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him tenfold more the child of hell than yourselves."[1] Bouddhism has had enormous missionary success from one point of view. Not long ago it was said that it outnumbered Christendom. But it is to be observed that it finds adherents among people of only one type of thought and character.[2] Outside these races it is and must ever be, non-existent. We may except the fanciful perversion of a few idle people in London, Calcutta, or Ceylon, captivated for a season or two by

[1] Matt. xxiii. 15.

[2] Bouddhism, it is now said, appears to be on the wane, and the period for its disappearance gradually approaching, according to the Boden Professor of Sanscrit at Oxford. In his opinion this creed is "one of rapidly increasing disintegration and decline," and "as a form of popular religion Bouddhism is gradually losing its vitality and hold on the vast populations once loyal to its rule." He computes the number of Bouddhists at 100,000,000; not 400,000,000 as hitherto estimated; and places Christianity numerically at the head of all religions. Next Confucianism, thirdly Hinduism; then Bouddhism, and last Mohammedanism. He affirms that the capacity of Bouddhism for resistance must give way before the "mighty forces which are destined to sweep the earth."

"the light of Asia." We may except also a very few more remarkable cases where the esoteric principle of Bouddhism commends itself to certain profound thinkers stricken with the dreary disease of modern sentiment. Mohammedanism has also, in a limited degree, proved itself a missionary religion, not only by the sword. In British India it counts millions of adherents, and it is still making some progress in India. In other ages whole Christian populations (but belonging to heretical and debased forms of Christianity) have gone over to Mohammedanism. Let us be just to it.[1] It once elevated the pagan Arabs. Even now it elevates the Negro above his fetisch. But it must ever remain a religion for stationary races, with its sterile God and its poor literality, the dead book pressing upon it with a weight of lead. Its merits are these—it inculcates a lofty if sterile Theism; it fulfils the pledge conveyed in the word Moslem, by inspiring a calm if frigid resignation to destiny; it teaches the duty of prayer with a strange impressiveness. But whole realms of thought and feeling are crushed out by its bloody and lustful grasp. It is without purity, without tenderness, and without humility.

Thus then we come back again with a truer insight to the exclusive fitness of Christ to meet the wants of mankind.

Others beside the Incarnate Lord have obtained from a portion of their fellow-men some measure of passionate enthusiasm. Each people has a hero during this life, call him demigod, or what we will. But such men are idolised by one race alone. The very qualities

[1] That modern English writers have been more than just to Mohammed is proved overwhelmingly by the living Missionary who knows Mohammedanism best.—*Mohammed and Mohammedans.* Dr. Koelle.

which procure them an apotheosis are precisely those which prove how narrow the type is which they represent; how far they are from speaking to all humanity. A national type is a narrow and exclusive type.

No European, unless effeminated and enfeebled, could really love an Asiatic Messiah. But Christ is loved everywhere. No race or kindred is exempt from the sweet contagion produced by the universal appeal of the universal Saviour. From all languages spoken by the lips of man, hymns of adoration are offered to Him. We read in England the Confessions of St. Augustine. Those words still quiver with the emotions of penitence and praise; still breathe the breath of life. Those ardent affections, those yearnings of personal love to Christ, which filled the heart of Augustine fifteen centuries ago, under the blue sky of Africa, touch us even now under this grey heaven in the fierce hurry of our modern life. But they have in them equally the possibility of touching the Shanar of Tinnevelly, the Negro—even the Bushman, or the native of Terra del Fuego. By a homage of such diversity and such extent we recognise a universal Saviour for the universal wants of universal man, the fitting propitiation for the whole world.

Towards the close of this Epistle St. John oracularly utters three great canons of universal Christian consciousness—"we know," "we know," "we know." Of these three canons the second is—"we know that we are from God, and the world lieth wholly in the wicked one." "A characteristic Johannic exaggeration"! some critic has exclaimed; yet surely even in Christian lands where men lie outside the influences of the Divine society, we have only to read the Police-reports to justify the Apostle. In volumes of travels, again, in the

pages of Darwin and Baker, from missionary records in places where the earth is full of darkness and cruel habitations, we are told of deeds of lust and blood which almost make us blush to bear the same form with creatures so degraded. Yet the very same missionary records bear witness that in every race which the Gospel proclamation has reached, however low it may be placed in the scale of the ethnologist; deep under the ruins of the fall are the spiritual instincts, the affections which have for their object the infinite God, and for their career the illimitable ages. The shadow of sin is broad indeed. But in the evening light of God's love the shadow of the cross is projected further still into the infinite beyond. Missionary success is therefore sure, if it be slow. The reason is given by St. John. "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the whole world."

NOTES.

Ch. i. 5 to ii. 2.

Ver. 5. The Word, the Life, the Light, are connected in the first chapter as in John i. 3, 4, 5. Upon earth, behind all life is light; in the spiritual world, behind all light is life.

Darkness.] The schoolmen well said that there is a fourfold darkness—of nature, of ignorance, of misery, of sin. The symbol of light applied to God must designate perfect goodness and beauty, combined with blissful consciousness of it, and transparent luminous clearness of wisdom.

Ver. 7. *The blood of Jesus His Son*] Sc. poured forth. This word (the Blood) denotes more vividly and effectively than any other could do three great realities of the Christian belief—the reality of the Manhood of Jesus, the reality of His sufferings, the reality of His sacrifice. It is dogma; but dogma made pictorial, pathetic, almost passionate. It may be noted that much current thought and feeling

around us is just at the opposite extreme. It is a semi-doketism which is manifested in two different forms. (1) Whilst it need not be denied that there are hymns which are pervaded by an ensanguined materialism, and which are calculated to wound reverence, as well as taste; it is clear that much criticism on hymns and sermons, where the "Blood of Jesus" is at all appealed to, has an ultra-refinement which is unscriptural and rationalistic. It is out of touch with St. Paul (Col. i. 14-20), with the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. ix. 14) (a passage strikingly like this verse), with St. Peter (1 Pet. i. 19), with St. John in this Epistle, with the redeemed in heaven (Apoc. v. 9). (2) A good deal of feeling against representations in sacred art seems to have its origin in this sort of unconscious semi-doketism. It appears to be thought that when representation supersedes symbolism, Christian thought and feeling necessarily lose everything and gain nothing. But surely it ought to be remembered that for a being like man there are two worlds, one of ideas, the other of facts; one of philosophy, the other of history. The one is filled with things which are conceived, the other with things which are done. One contents itself with a shadowy symbol, the other is not satisfied except by a concrete representation. So we venture respectfully to think that the image of the dead Christ is not foreign to Scripture or Scriptural thought; simply because, *as a fact*, He died. Calvary, the tree, the wounds, were not ideal. The crucifixion was not a symbol for dainty and refined abstract theorists. The form of the Crucified was not veiled by silver mists and crowned with roses. He who realises the meaning of the "Blood of Jesus," and is *consistent*, will not be severe upon the expression of the same thought in another form.

"Note that which Estius hath upon the blood of his Son, that in them there is a confutation of three heresies at once: the Manichees, who deny the truth of Christ's human nature, since, as Alexander said of his wound, *clamat me esse hominem*, it proclaimeth me a man, we may say of His blood, for had He not been man He could not have bled, have died; the Ebionites, who deny Him to be God, since, being God's natural Son, He must needs be of the same essence with Himself; and the Nestorians, who make two persons, which, if

true, the blood of Christ the man could not have been called the blood of Christ the Son of God."

"That which I conceive here chiefly to be taken notice of is, that our Apostle contents not himself to say the *blood of Jesus Christ*, but he addeth *His Son*, to intimate to us how this blood became available to our cleansing, to wit, as it was the blood not merely of the Son of Mary, the Son of David, the Son of Man, but of Him who was also the Son of God."

"Behold, O sinner, the exceeding love of thy Saviour, who, that He might cleanse thee when polluted in thy blood, was pleased to shed His own blood. Indeed, the pouring out of Christ's blood was a super-excellent work of charity; hence it is that these two are joined together; and when the Scripture speaketh of His love, it presently annexeth His sufferings. We read, that when Christ wept for Lazarus, John xi. 36, the standers by said, "See how He loved him." Surely if His tears, much more His blood, proclaimeth His affection towards us. The Jews were the scribes, the nails were the pens, His body the white paper, and His blood the red ink; and the characters were love, exceeding love, and these so fairly written that he which runs may read them. I shut up this with that of devout Bernard, Behold and look upon the rose of His bloody passion, how His redness bespeaketh His flaming love, there being, as it were, a contention betwixt His passion and affection: this, that it might be hotter; that, that it might be redder. Nor had His sufferings been so red with blood had not His heart been inflamed with love. Oh let us beholding magnify, magnifying admire, and admiring praise Him for His inestimable goodness, saying with the holy Apostle (Rev. i. 5), 'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, be honour and glory for ever.'"—*Dean Hardy* (pp. 77, 78.) Observe on this verse its unison of thought and feeling with Apoc. i. 5, xxii. 14.

Chap. ii. 1. *We have an Advocate*] literally Paraclete. One called in to aid him whose cause is to be tried or petition considered. The word is used only by St. John, four times in the Gospel, of the Holy Ghost;[1] once here of Christ.

"And now, O thou drooping sinner, let me bespeak thee in

[1] John xiv. 16, 26, xv. 26, xvi. 7.

St. Austin's[1] language: Thou committest thy cause to an eloquent lawyer, and art safe; how canst thou miscarry, when thou hast the Word to be thy advocate? Let me put this question to thee: If, when thou sinnest, thou hadst all the angels, saints, confessors, martyrs, in those celestial mansions to beg thy pardon, dost thou think they would not speed? I tell thee, one word out of Christ's mouth is more worth than all their conjoined entreaties. When, therefore, thy daily infirmities discourage thee, or particular falls affright thee, imagine with thyself that thou heardst thy advocate pleading for thee in these or the like expressions: O My loving Father, look upon the face of Thine Anointed; behold the hands, and feet, and side of Thy crucified Christ! I had no sins of My own for which I thus suffered; no, it was for the sins of this penitent wretch, who in My name sued for pardon! Father, I am Thy Son, the Son of Thy love, Thy bosom, who plead with Thee; it is for Thy child, Thy returning penitent child, I plead. That for which I pray is no more than what I paid for; I have merited pardon for all that come to Me! Oh let those merits be imputed, and that pardon granted to this poor sinner! Cheer up, then, thou disconsolate soul, Christ is an advocate for thee, and therefore do not despair, but believe; and believing, rejoice; and rejoicing, triumph."—*Dean Hardy* (pp. 128, 129). In these days, when petitions to Jesus to pray for us have crept into hymns and are creeping into liturgies, it may be well to note that in the remains of the early saints and in the solemn formulas of the Christian Church, Christ is not asked to pray for us, but to hear our prayers. The Son is prayed to; the Father is prayed to through the Son; the Son is never prayed to pray to the Father. (See Greg. Nazianz., *Oratio* xxx., *Theologiæ* iv., *de Filio*. See Thomassin, *Dogm. Theol.*, lib. ix., cap. 6, Tom. iv. 220, 227.)

Ver. 2. *Not for ours only.*] This large-hearted afterthought reminds one of St. Paul's "corrective and ampliative" addition; of his chivalrous abstinence from exclusiveness in thought or word, when having dictated "Jesus Christ our Lord," his voice falters, and he feels constrained to say—"both theirs, and ours" (1 Cor. i. 2).

[1] Aug. *in loc.*

SECTION III. (1).

GREEK.

Καὶ ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐγνώκαμεν αὐτὸν, ἐὰν τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν. ὁ λέγων, ὅτι "Ἔγνωκα αὐτὸν," καὶ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ μὴ τηρῶν, ψεύστης ἐστὶν, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν· ὃς δ' ἂν τηρῇ αὐτοῦ τὸν λόγον, ἀληθῶς ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ τετελείωται. ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐσμεν. ὁ λέγων ἐν αὐτῷ μένειν, ὀφείλει, καθὼς ἐκεῖνος περιεπάτησεν, καὶ αὐτὸς οὕτως περιπατεῖν.

LATIN.

Et in hoc scimus quoniam cognovimus eum, si mandata eius observemus. Qui dicit se nosse eum et mandata eius non custodit, mendax est, et in eo veritas non est: qui autem servat verbum eius, vere in eo caritas Dei perfecta est: in hoc scimus quoniam in ipso sumus. Qui dicit se in ipso manere debet sicut ille ambulavit et ipse ambulare.

AUTHORISED VERSION.

And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in Him. But whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.

REVISED VERSION.

And *hereby know* we that we *know* Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him: but whoso keepeth His word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected. Hereby know we that we are in Him: he that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also to walk even as He walked.

ANOTHER VERSION.

And hereby we do know that we have knowledge of Him, if we observe His commandments. He that saith I have knowledge of Him and observeth not His commandments is a liar, and in this man the truth is not. But whoso observeth His word verily in this man the love of God is perfected. Hereby know we that we are in Him: he that saith he abideth in Him is bound, even as He walked, so also himself to be ever walking.

DISCOURSE V.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE GREAT LIFE WALK A PERSONAL INFLUENCE.

"He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk even as He also walked."—1 JOHN ii. 6.

THIS verse is one of those in reading which we may easily fall into the fallacy of mistaking *familiarity* for knowledge.

Let us bring out its meaning with accuracy.

St. John's hatred of unreality, of lying in every form, leads him to claim in Christians a perfect correspondence between the outward profession and the inward life, as well as the visible manifestation of it. "He that saith" always marks a danger to those who are outwardly in Christian communion. It is the "take notice" of a hidden falsity. He whose claim, possibly whose vaunt, is that he abideth in Christ, has contracted a moral debt of far-reaching significance. St. John seems to pause for a moment. He points to a picture in a page of the scroll which is beside him—the picture of Christ in the Gospel drawn by himself; not a vague magnificence, a mere harmony of colour, but a likeness of absolute historical truth. Every pilgrim of time in the continuous course of his daily walk, outward and inward, has by the possession of that Gospel contracted an obligation to be walking by the one great life-walk of the Pilgrim of eternity. The very depth and intensity of feeling half hushes the Apostle's

voice. Instead of the beloved Name which all who love it will easily supply,[1] St. John uses the reverential *He*, the pronoun which specially belongs to Christ in the vocabularly of the Epistle.[2] "He that saith he abideth in Him" is bound, even as HE once walked, to be ever walking.

I.

The importance of *example* in the moral and spiritual life gives emphasis to this canon of St. John.

Such an example as can be sufficient for creatures like ourselves should be at once manifested in concrete form and susceptible of ideal application.

This was felt by a great but unhappily anti-christian thinker, the exponent of a severe and lofty morality. Mr. Mill fully confesses that there may be an elevating and an ennobling influence in a Divine ideal; and thus justifies the apparently startling precept—"be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect."[3] But he considered that some more human model was necessary for the moral striver. He recommends novel-readers, when they are charmed or strengthened by some conception of pure manhood or womanhood, to carry that conception with them into their own lives. He would have them ask themselves in difficult positions, how that strong and lofty man, that tender and unselfish woman, would have behaved in similar circumstances, and so bear about with them a standard of duty at once compendious and

[1] "Nomen facile supplent credentes, plenum pectus habentes memoriâ Domini."—*Bengel.*

[2] Ἐκεῖνος in our Epistle belongs to Christ in every place but one where it occurs (1 John ii. 6. iii. 3, 5, 7, 16, iv. 17; cf. John i. 18, ii. 21). It is very much equivalent to our reverent usage of printing the pronoun which refers to Christ with a capital letter.

[3] Matt. vi. 45.

affecting. But to this there is one fatal objection—that such an elaborate process of make-believe is practically impossible. A fantastic morality, if it were possible at all, must be a feeble morality. Surely an authentic example will be greatly more valuable.

But *example*, however precious, is made indefinitely more powerful when it is *living* example, example crowned by personal influence.

So far as the stain of a guilty past can be removed from those who have contracted it; they are improvable and capable of restoration, chiefly, perhaps almost exclusively, by personal influence in some form. When a process of deterioration and decay has set in in any human soul, the germ of a more wholesome growth is introduced in nearly every case, by the transfusion and transplantation of healthier life. We test the soundness or the putrefaction of a soul by its capacity of receiving and assimilating this germ of restoration. A parent is in doubt whether a son is susceptible of renovation, whether he has not become wholly evil. He tries to bring the young man under the personal influence of a friend of noble and sympathetic character. Has his son any capacity left for being touched by such a character; of admiring its strength on one side, its softness on another? When he is in contact with it, when he perceives how pure, how self-sacrificing, how true and straight it is, is there a glow in his face, a trembling of his voice, a moisture in his eye, a wholesome self-humiliation? Or does he repel all this with a sneer and a bitter gibe? Has he that evil attribute which is possessed only by the most deeply corrupt—"they blaspheme, rail at glories."[1] The

[1] δόξας βλασφημοῦντες (2 Peter ii, 10; Jude v. 8).

Chaplain of a penitentiary records that among the most degraded of its inmates was one miserable creature. The Matron met her with firmness, but with a good will which no hardness could break down, no insolence overcome. One evening after prayers the Chaplain observed this poor outcast stealthily kissing the shadow of the Matron thrown by her candle upon the wall He saw that the diseased nature was beginning to be capable of assimilating new life, that the victory of wholesome personal influence had begun. He found reason for concluding that his judgment was well founded.

The law of restoration by living example through personal influence pervades the whole of our human relations under God's natural and moral government as truly as the principle of mediation. This law also pervades the system of restoration revealed to us by Christianity. It is one of the chief results of the Incarnation itself. It begins to act upon us first, when the Gospels become something more to us than a mere history, when we realise in some degree how He walked. But it is not complete until we know that all this is not merely of the past, but of the present; that He is not dead, but living; that we may therefore use that little word *is* about Christ in the lofty sense of St. John—"even as He *is* pure;" "in Him *is* no sin;" "even as He *is* righteous;" "He *is* the propitiation for our sins." If this is true, as it undoubtedly is, of all good human influence personal and living, is it not true of the Personal and living Christ in an infinitely higher degree? If the shadow of Peter overshadowing the sick had some strange efficacy; if handkerchiefs or aprons from the body of Paul wrought upon the sick

and possessed; what may be the spiritual result of contact with Christ Himself? Of one of those men specially gifted to raise struggling natures and of others like him, a true poet lately taken from us has sung in one of his most glorious strains. Matthew Arnold likens mankind to a host inexorably bound by divine appointment to march over mountain and desert to the city of God. But they become entangled in the wilderness through which they march, split into mutinous factions, and are in danger of "battering on the rocks" for ever in vain, of dying one by one in the waste. Then comes the poet's appeal to the "Servants of God":—

> "Then in the hour of need
> Of your fainting dispirited race,
> Ye like angels appear!
> Languor is not in your heart,
> Weakness is not in your word,
> Weariness not on your brow.
> Eyes rekindling, and prayers
> Follow your steps as ye go.
> Ye fill up the gaps in our file,
> Strengthen the wavering line,
> Stablish, continue our march—
> On, to the bound of the waste—
> On to the City of God."[1]

If all this be true of the personal influence of good and strong men—true in proportion to their goodness and strength—it must be true of the influence of the Strongest and Best with Whom we are brought into personal relation by prayer and sacraments, and by meditation upon the sacred record which tells us what

[1] *Poems by Matthew Arnold* ("Rugby Chapel," Nov. 1857), vol. ii., pp. 251, 255

His one life-walk was. Strength is not wanting upon His part, for He is able to save to the uttermost. Pity is not wanting; for to use touching words (attributed to St. Paul in a very ancient apocryphal document), "He alone sympathised with a world that has lost its way."[1]

Let it not be forgotten that in that of which St. John speaks lies the true answer to an objection, formulated by the great anti-christian writer above quoted, and constantly repeated by others. "The ideal of Christian morality," says Mr. Mill, "is negative rather than positive; passive rather than active; innocence rather than nobleness; abstinence from evil, rather than energetic pursuit of good; in its precepts (as has been well said), 'thou shalt not' predominates unduly over 'thou shalt.'"[2] The answer is this. (1) A true religious system must have a distinct moral code. If not, it would be justly condemned for "expressing itself" (in the words of Mr. Mill's own accusation against Christianity elsewhere) "in language most general, and possessing rather the impressiveness of poetry or eloquence than the precision of legislation." But the necessary formula of precise legislation is, "thou shalt not"; and without this it cannot be precise. (2) But further. To say that Christian legislation is negative, a mere string of "thou shalt nots," is just such a superficial accusation as might be expected from a man who should enter a church upon some rare occasion, and happen to listen to the ten commandments, but fall asleep before he could hear the Epistle and Gospel. The philosopher

[1] ὃς μόνος συνεπαθήσεν πλανωμένῳ κόσμῳ. *Acta Paul. et Thec.* 16, *Acta. Apost. Apoc.* 47. Edit. Tischendorf.

[2] *On Liberty.* John Stuart Mill (chap. iii.).

of duty, Kant, has told us that the peculiarity of a moral principle, of any proposition which states what duty is, is to convey the meaning of an imperative through the form of an indicative. In his own expressive if pedantic language—"its categorical form involves an epitactic meaning." St. John asserts that the Christian "ought to walk even as Christ walked." To every one who receives it, that proposition is therefore precisely equivalent to a *command*—"walk as Christ walked." Is it a negative, passive morality, a mere system of "thou shalt not," which contains such a precept as that? Does not the Christian religion in virtue of this alone enforce a great "thou shalt;" which every man who brings himself within its range will find rising with him in the morning, following him like his shadow all day long, and lying down with him when he goes to rest?

II.

It should be clearly understood that in the words "even as He walked," the Gospel of St. John is both referred to and attested.

For surely to point with any degree of moral seriousness to an example, is to presuppose some clear knowledge and definite record of it. No example can be beautiful or instructive when its shape is lost in darkness. It has indeed been said by a deeply religious writer, "that the likeness of the Christian to Christ is to His character, not to the particular form in which it was historically manifested." And this, of course, is in one sense a truism. But how else except by this historical manifestation can we know the character of Christ in any true sense of the word knowledge? For those who are familiar with the fourth

Gospel, the term "walk" was tenderly significant. For if it was used with a reminiscence of the Old Testament and of the language of our Lord,[1] to denote the whole continuous activity of the life of any man inward and outward, there was another signification which became entwined with it. St. John had used the word historically[2] in his Gospel, not without allusion to the Saviour's homelessness on earth, to His itinerant life of beneficence and of teaching.[3] Those who first received this Epistle with deepest reverence as the utterance of the Apostle whom they loved, when they came to the precept—"walk even as He walked"—would ask themselves *how* did He walk? What do we know of the great rule of life thus proposed to us? The Gospel which accompanied this letter, and with which it was in some way closely connected, was a sufficient and definite answer.

III.

The character of Christ in his Gospel is thus, according to St. John, the loftiest ideal of purity, peace, self-sacrifice, unbroken communion with God; the inexhaustible fountain of regulated thoughts, high aims, holy action, constant prayer.

We may advert to one aspect of this perfection as delineated in the fourth Gospel—our Lord's way of doing small things, or at least things which in human estimation appear to be small.

The fourth chapter of that Gospel contains a marvellous record of word and work. Let us trace that

[1] John viii. 12-35. For Apostolic usage of the word, see Acts i. 21; Rom. vi. 4; Ephes. ii. 10; Col. iii. 7.

[2] John vii. 1.

[3] "Ambulando docebat."—*Bretschneider.*

record back to its beginning. There are seeds of spiritual life scattered in many hearts which were destined to yield a rich harvest in due time; there is the account of one sensuous nature, quickened and spiritualised; there are promises which have been for successive centuries as a river of God to weary natures. All these results issue from three words spoken by a tired traveller, sitting naturally over a well—"give me to drink."

We take another instance. There is one passage in St. John's Gospel which divides with the proœmium of his Epistle, the glory of being the loftiest, the most prolonged, the most sustained, in the Apostle's writings.

It is the prelude of a work which might have seemed to be of little moment. Yet all the height of a great ideal is over it, like the vault of heaven; all the power of a Divine purpose is under it, like the strength of the great deep; all the consciousness of His death, of His ascension, of His coming dominion, of His Divine origin, of His session at God's right hand—all the hoarded love in His heart for His own which were in the world—passes by some mysterious transference into that little incident of tenderness and of humiliation. He sets an everlasting mark upon it, not by a basin of gold crusted with gems, nor by mixing precious scents with the water which He poured out, nor by using linen of the finest tissue, but by the absolute perfection of love and dutiful humility in the spirit and in every detail of the whole action. It is one more of those little chinks through which the whole sunshine of heaven streams in upon those who have eyes to see.[1]

[1] John xiii. 1-6.

The underlying secret of this feature of our Lord's character is told by Himself. "My meat is to be ever doing the will of Him that sent Me, and so when the time comes by one great decisive act to finish His work."[1] All along the course of that life-walk there were smaller preludes to the great act which won our redemption—multitudinous daily little perfect epitomes of love and sacrifice, without which the crowning sacrifice would not have been what it was. The plan of our life must, of course, be constructed on a scale as different as the human from the Divine. Yet there is a true sense in which this lesson of the great life may be applied to us.

The apparently small things of life must not be despised or neglected on account of their smallness, by those who would follow the precept of St. John. Patience and diligence in petty trades, in services called menial, in waiting on the sick and old, in a hundred such works, all come within the sweep of this net, with its lines that look as thin as cobwebs, and which yet for Christian hearts are stronger than fibres of steel—'walk even as He walked." This, too, is our only security. A French poet has told a beautiful tale. Near a river which runs between French and German territory, a blacksmith was at work one snowy night near Christmas time. He was tired out, standing by his forge, and wistfully looking towards his little home, lighted up a short quarter of a mile away, and wife and children waiting for their festal supper, when he should return. It came to the last piece of his work, a rivet which it was difficult to finish properly; for it was of peculiar shape, intended by the contractor who

[1] Ἵνα ποιῶ . . καὶ τελειώσω (John iv. 34).

employed him to pin the metal work of a bridge which he was constructing over the river. The smith was sorely tempted to fail in giving honest work, to hurry over a job which seemed at once so troublesome and so trifling. But some good angel whispered to the man that he should do his best. He turned to the forge with a sigh, and never rested until the work was as complete as his skill could make it. The poet carries us on for a year or two. War breaks out. A squadron of the blacksmith's countrymen is driven over the bridge in headlong flight. Men, horses, guns, try its solidity. For a moment or two the whole weight of the mass really hangs upon the one rivet. There are times in life when the whole weight of the soul also hangs upon a rivet; the rivet of sobriety, of purity, of honesty, of command of temper. Possibly we have devoted little or no honest work to it in the years when we should have perfected the work; and so, in the day of trial, the rivet snaps, and we are lost.

There is one word of encouragement which should be finally spoken for the sake of one class of God's servants.

Some are sick, weary, broken, paralysed, it may be slowly dying. What—they sometimes think—have we to do with this precept? Others who have hope, elasticity, capacity of service, may walk as He walked; but we can scarcely do so. Such persons should remember what walking in the Christian sense is—all life's activity inward and outward. Let them think of Christ upon His cross. He was fixed to it, nailed hand and foot. Nailed; yet never—not when He trod upon the waves, not when He moved upward through the air to His throne—never did He walk more truly,

because He walked in the way of perfect love. It is just whilst looking at the moveless form upon the tree that we may hear most touchingly the great "thou shalt" —thou shalt walk even as He walked.

IV.

As there is a literal, so there is a mystical walking as Christ walked. This is an idea which deeply pervades St. Paul's writings. Is it His birth? We are born again. Is it His life? We walk with Him in newness of life. Is it His death? We are crucified with Him. Is it His burial? We are buried with Him. Is it His resurrection? We are risen again with Him. Is it His ascension—His very session at God's right hand? "He hath raised us up and made us sit together with Him in heavenly places." They know nothing of St. Paul's mind who know nothing of this image of a soul seen in the very dust of death, loved, pardoned, quickened, elevated, crowned, throned. It was this conception at work from the beginning in the general consciousness of Christians which moulded round itself the order of the Christian year.

It will illustrate this idea for us if we think of the difference between the outside and the inside of a church.

Outside on some high spire we see the light just lingering far up, while the shadows are coldly gathering in the streets below; and we know that it is winter. Again the evening falls warm and golden on the churchyard, and we recognise the touch of summer. But inside it is always God's weather; it is Christ all the year long. Now the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, or circumcised with the knife of the law, manifested to

the Gentiles, or manifesting Himself with a glory that breaks through the veil; now the Man tempted in the wilderness; now the victim dying on the cross; now the Victor risen, ascended, sending the Holy Spirit; now for twenty-five Sundays worshipped as the Everlasting Word with the Father and the Holy Ghost. In this mystical following of Christ also, the one perpetual lesson is—"he that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk even as He walked."

NOTES.

Ch. ii. 3-11.

Ver. 4. *A liar.*] There are many things which the "sayer" says by the language of his life rather than by his lips to others: many things which he says to himself. "We lead ourselves astray" (i. 8). We "say" I have knowledge of Him, while yet we observe not His commandments. Strange that we can lie to the one being who knows the truth thoroughly—*self*; and having lied, can get the lie believed,—

> "Like one,
> Who having, unto truth, by telling of it,
> Made such a sinner of his memory,
> To credit his own lie."
>
> *Tempest*, Act I. Sc. 2.

Ver. 7. *Fresh.*] There are two quite different words alike translated new in A. V.: one of these is the word used here (καινός); the other (νέος). The first always signifies *new* in quality—intellectual, ethical, spiritual *novelty*—that which is opposed to, which replaces and supersedes, the antiquated, inferior, outworn; *new* in the world of thought. (Heb. viii. 13 states this with perfect precision.) It may sometimes not inadequately be rendered *fresh* ("youngly," Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*). The other term (νέος) is simply *recent; new* chronologically in the world of time.

Which ye heard from the beginning.] Probably a recognition of St. Paul's teaching at Ephesus, and of his Epistle to the Ephesians.

Ver. 8. To many commentators this verse seems almost of insoluble difficulty. Surely, however, the meaning is clear enough for those who will place themselves within the atmosphere of St. John's thought. "Again a fresh commandment I am writing to you" [this commandment, charity, is no unreal and therefore delusive standard of duty]. Taken as one great "whole" (δ) "it is true," matter of observable historical fact, because it is realised in Him who gave the commandment; capable of realisation, and even in measure realised in you. [And this can be actually done by Christians, and recognised more and more by others], "because the shadow is drifting by from the landscape even of the world, and the light, the very light, enlighteneth by a new ideal and a new example."

Ver. 10. *Scandal.*] In Greek is the rendering of two Hebrew words. (1) That against which we trip and stumble, a stumbling-block; (2) A hook or snare.

Ver. 11. The terrible force of this truly Hebraistic parallelism should be noted.

1. He that hateth his brother *is* in darkness.
2. " " " walketh in darkness.
3. " " " knoweth not where he goeth.
4. " " " darkness has blinded his eyes

The third beat of the parallelism contains an allusion to that Cain among the nations, the Jewish people in our Lord's time. (John xii. 35.)

In illustration of the powerful expression, ("darkness has blinded his eyes") the present writer quoted a striking passage from Professor Drummond, who adduces a parallel for the Christian's loss of the spiritual faculty, by the atrophy of organs which takes place in moles, and in the fish in dark caverns. (*Speaker's Commentary, in loc.*) But as regards the mole at least, a great observer of Nature entirely denies the alleged atrophy. Mr. Buckland quotes Dr. Lee in a paper, in the Proceedings of the Royal Society, where he says,—"the eye of the mole presents us with an instance of an organ which is rudimentary, not by arrest of development, but through disuse, aided perhaps by natural selection." But Mr. Buckland asserts that "the same great Wisdom who made the mole's teeth the most beautiful set of insectivorous teeth among

animals, also made its eye fit for the work it has to do. The mole has been designed to prey upon earthworms; they will not come up to the surface to him, so he must go down into the earth to them. For this purpose his eyes are fitted." (*Life of F. Buckland*, pp. 247, 248).

GREEK.	LATIN.	AUTHORISED VERSION.	REVISED VERSION.	ANOTHER VERSION.
Ἀγαπητοί, οὐκ ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφω ὑμῖν, ἀλλ' ἐντολὴν παλαιὰν ἣν εἴχετε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς· ἡ ἐντολὴ ἡ παλαιά ἐστιν ὁ λόγος ὃν ἠκούσατε. πάλιν ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφω ὑμῖν, ὅ ἐστιν ἀληθὲς ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν, ὅτι ἡ σκία παράγεται καὶ τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινὸν ἤδη φαίνει. ὁ λέγων ἐν τῷ φωτὶ εἶναι καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ μισῶν ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ἐστὶν ἕως ἄρτι. ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ μένει, καὶ σκάνδαλον ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν. ὁ δὲ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ἐστὶν καὶ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ περιπατεῖ, καὶ οὐκ οἶδε ποῦ ὑπάγει, ὅτι ἡ σκοτία ἐτύφλωσεν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ.	Carissimi non mandatum novum scribo vobis, sed mandatum vetus quod habuistis ab initio: mandatum vetus est verbum quod audistis. Iterum mandatum novum scribo vobis, quod est verum et in ipso et in vobis, quoniam tenebræ transierunt et lumen verum eam lucet. Qui dicit se in luce esse et fratrum suum odit, in tenebris est usque adhuc. Qui diliget fratrem suum in lumine manet, et scandalum in eo non est: qui autem odit fratrem suum, in tenebris est, et in tenebris ambulat et nescit quo eat, quoniam tenebræ obcæcaverunt oculos eius.	Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in Him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.	Beloved, no new commandment write I unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning: the old commandment is the word which ye heard. Again, a new commandment write I unto you, which thing is true in Him and in you: because the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in the darkness, and walketh in the darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes.	Beloved, no fresh commandment I am writing unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The commandment, the old commandment, is the word which ye heard. Again, a fresh commandment I am writing unto you, which thing [*as a whole*] is true in Him and in you: because the shadow is drifting by, and the light, the very *light*, is already enlightening. He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, in the darkness is he hitherto. He that loveth his brother in the light abideth he, and scandal in him there is not. But he that hateth his brother in the darkness is he, and in the darkness walketh he, and he knoweth not whither he goeth because the darkness hath blinded his eyes.

SECTION III. (3)

GREEK.

Γράφω ὑμῖν, τεκνία, ὅτι ἀφέωνται ὑμῖν αἱ ἁμαρτίαι διὰ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ. γράφω ὑμῖν, πατέρες, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς. γράφω ὑμῖν, νεανίσκοι, ὅτι νενικήκατε τὸν πονηρόν. ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, παιδία, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν πατέρα. ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, πατέρες, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς. ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, νεανίσκοι, ὅτι ἰσχυροί ἐστε, καὶ ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν μένει, καὶ νενικήκατε τὸν πονηρόν. μὴ ἀγαπᾶτε τὸν κόσμον, μηδὲ τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ. ἐάν τις ἀγαπᾷ τὸν κόσμον, οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν αὐτῷ· ὅτι πᾶν τὸ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῆς σαρκὸς καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν καὶ ἡ ἀλαζονία τοῦ βίου, οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς,

LATIN.

Scribo vobis, filioli, quoniam remittentur vobis, peccata propter nomen eius. Scribo vobis, patres, quoniam cognovistis eum qui ab initio est. Scribo vobis, adolescentes, quoniam vicistis malignum. Scribo vobis, infantes, quia cognovistis patrem. Scripsi vobis, iuvenes quia fortes estis et verbum Dei in vobis manet et vicistis malignum. Nolite diligere mundum ne que eaquæ in mundo sunt. Si quis diligit mundum, non est caritas Patris in eo: quoniam omne quod in mundo est, concupiscentia carnis est, et concupiscentia oculorum, et superbia vitæ; quæ non est ex Patre, sed ex mundo est. Et

AUTHORISED VERSION.

I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the

REVISED VERSION.

I write unto you, my little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye know Him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the evil one. I have written unto you, little children, because ye know the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye know Him which is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the evil one. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If

ANOTHER VERSION.

I am writing unto you, children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I am writing unto you, fathers, because ye have knowledge of Him who is from the beginning. I am writing unto you, young men, because ye are conquerors of the wicked one.

I have written unto you, little children, because ye have knowledge of the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have knowledge of Him who is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong and the word of God abideth in you, and ye are conquerors of the wicked one.

ἀλλὰ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἐστὶν καὶ ὁ κόσμος παράγεται καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία αὐτοῦ· ὁ δὲ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

mundus transibit et concupiscentia eius: qui autem facit voluntatem Dei, manet in eternam.

world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the arrogancy of living, is not from the Father, but from the world is it. And the world is drifting by, and the lust of it: but he that is doing the will of God abideth for ever.

DISCOURSE VI.

THE WORLD WHICH WE MUST NOT LOVE.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world."—1 JOHN ii. 15, 16.

AN adequate development of words so compressed and pregnant as these would require a separate treatise, or series of treatises.[1] But if we succeed in grasping St. John's conception of *the world*, we shall have a key that will open to us this cabinet of spiritual thought.

I.

In the writings of St. John the world is always found in one or other of four senses, as may be decided by the context. (1) It means the creation,[2] the universe.

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[1] After all deductions for the lack of accurate and searching textual exegesis, perhaps Bossuet's "Traité de la concupiscence, ou Exposition de ces Paroles de Saint Jean, 1 John ii. 15-17" (*Œuvres de Bossuet*, Tom. vii., 380-420), remains unrivalled.

[2] The word *κόσμος* originally signified ornament (chiefly perhaps of dress); figuratively it came to denote order. It was first applied by Pythagoras to the *universe*, from the conception of the order which reigns in it (Plut., *de Plac. Phil.*, ii. 1). From schools of philosophy it passed into the language of poets and writers of elevated prose. It is somewhat singular that the Romans, perhaps from Greek influence, came to apply "mundus" by the same process to *the world*, as it had also originally signified *ornament*, especially of female dress

So our Lord in His High-priestly prayer—"Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world."[1] (2) It is used for the earth *locally* as the place where man resides;[2] and whose soil the Son of God trod for awhile. "I am no more in the world, but these are in the world."[3] (3) It denotes the chief inhabitants of the earth, they to whom the counsels of God mainly point—men universally. Such a transference is common in nearly all languages. Both the inhabitants of a building, and the material structure which contains them, are called "a house;" and the inhabitants are frequently bitterly blamed, while the beauty of the structure is passionately admired. In this sense there is a magnificent width in the word *world*. We cannot but feel indignant at attempts to gird its grandeur within the narrow rim of a human system. "The bread that I will give," said He who knew best, "is My flesh which I will give for the life of the world."[4] "He is the propitiation for the whole world," writes the Apostle at the beginning of this chapter. In this sense, if we would imitate Christ, if we would aspire to the Father's perfection, "love not the world" must be tempered by that other tender oracle—"God so loved the world."[5]

(See Richard Bentley against Boyle, *Opera Philol.*, 347-445, and Notes, Humboldt's *Cosmos*, xiii.). In the LXX. κόσμος does not appear as the translation of עוֹלָם its spiritual equivalent in Hebrew; but very often in the sense of "ornament" and "order." (See Tromm., *Concord. Gr. in LXX.*, I, 913), but it is found as *world* several times in the Apocrypha (Wisdom vi. 26, vii. 18, ix. 3, xi. 18, xv. 14; 2 Mac. iii. 12, vii. 9-23, viii. 18, xiii. 14.

[1] John xvii. 24.

[2] In Hebrew תֵּבֵל habitable globe; translated *οἰκουμένη* in LXX. (see Psalm lxxxix. 11).

[3] John v. 11.

[4] John vi. 31; 1 John ii. 2.

[5] John iii. 16. It may be added that these are passages where the

In none of these senses can the world here be understood.[1]

There remains then (4) a fourth signification, which has two allied shades of thought. World is employed to cover the whole present existence, with its blended good and evil—susceptible of elevation by grace, susceptible also of deeper depths of sin and ruin. But yet again the indifferent meaning passes into one that is wholly evil, wholly within a region of darkness. The first creation was pronounced by God in each department "good" collectively; when crowned by God's masterpiece in man, "very good."[2] "All things," our Apostle tells us, "were made through Him (the Word), and without Him was not any thing made that was made."[3] But as that was a world wholly good, so is this a world wholly evil. This evil world is not God's creation, drew not its origin from Him. All that is *in* it came out *from* it, from nothing *higher*.[4] This wholly evil world is not the material creation; if it were, we should be landed in dualism, or Manicheism. It is not an entity, an actual tangible thing, a creation. It is not of God's world that St. John cries in that last fierce word of abhorrence which he flings at it as he sees the shadowy thing like an evil spirit made visible in an idol's arms—"the world lieth wholly in the evil one."[5]

This anti-world, this caricature of creation, this

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world as humanity generally passes into the darker meaning of that portion of it which is actively hostile to God. John xv. 18, 19.

[1] See note on ver. 16 at the end of the next Discourse.

[2] Gen. i. 31.

[3] John i. 3.

[4] The writer does not happen to remember any commentator who has pointed out this subtle but powerful thought, πᾶν τὸ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ—ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἐστίν (1 John ii. 16).

[5] 1 John v. 19.

thing of negations, is spun out of three abuses of the endowment of God's glorious gift of free-will to man; out of three noble instincts ignobly used. *First*, "the lust of the flesh"—of which flesh is the seat, and supplies the organic medium through which it works. The flesh is that softer part of the frame which by the network of the nerves is intensely susceptible of pleasurable and painful sensations; capable of heroic patient submission to the higher principles of conscience and spirit,[1] capable also of frightful rebellion. Of all theologians St. John is the least likely to fall into the exaggeration of libelling the flesh as essentially evil. Is it not he who, whether in his Gospel, or in his Epistles, delights to speak of the *flesh* of Jesus, to record words in which He refers to it?[2] Still the flesh brings us into contact with all sins which are sins that spring from, and end in, the senses. Shall we ask for a catalogue of particulars from St. John? Nay, we cannot expect that the virgin Apostle, who received the virgin Mother from the Virgin Lord upon the cross, will sully his virgin pen with words so abhorred. When he has uttered *the lust of the flesh* his shudder is followed by an eloquent silence. We can fill up the blank too well—drunkenness, gluttony, thoughts and motions which spring from deliberate, wilfully cherished, rebellious sensuality; which fill many of us with pain and fear, and wring cries and bitter tears from penitents, and even from saints. The *second*, abuse of free-will, the second element in this world which is not God's world, is the desire of which the eyes are the seat—"the lust of the eyes." To

[1] John xiv. 1; 1 John iv. 2, 3; 2 John 7.
[2] John vi. 51, 53-56; 1 John iv. 2, 3; 2 John 7.

the two sins which we instinctively associate with this phrase—voluptuousness and curiosity of the senses or the soul—Scripture might seem to add *envy*, which derives so much of its aliment from sight. In this lies the Christian's warning against wilfully indulging in evil sights, bad plays, bad books, bad pictures. He who is outwardly the spectator of these things becomes inwardly the actor of them. The eye is, so to speak, the burning-glass of the soul; it draws the rays from their evil brightness to a focus, and may kindle a raging fire in the heart. Under this department comes unregulated spiritual or intellectual curiosity. The first need not trouble us so much as it did Christians in a more believing time. Comparatively very few are in danger from the *planchette* or from astrology. But surely it is a rash thing for an ordinary mind, without a clear call of duty, without any adequate preparation, to place its faith within the deadly grip of some powerful adversary. People really seem to have absolutely no conscience about reading anything—the last philosophical Life of Christ, or the last romance; of which the titles might be with advantage exchanged, for the philosophical history is a light romance, and the romance is a heavy philosophy. The *third* constituent in the evil anti-trinity of the anti-world is "the pride" (the arrogancy, gasconade, almost swagger) of life," of which the lower life[1] is the seat. The thought is not so much of outward pomp and ostentation as of that false pride which arises in the heart. The arrogancy is within; the gasconade plays its "fantastic tricks before high heaven." And each of these three elements (making up as they do collectively all that is "in the world" and springing out of the

[1] ἡ ἀλαζονία τοῦ βίου.

world) is not a substantive thing, not an original ingredient of man's nature, or among the forms of God's world; it is the perversion of an element which had a use that was noble, or at least innocent. For first comes "the lust of the flesh." Take those two objects to which this lust turns with a fierce and perverted passion. The possession of flesh in itself leads man to crave for the necessary support to his native weakness. The mutual craving for the love of beings so like and so unlike as man and woman, if it be a weakness, has at least a most touching and exquisite side. Again, is not a yearning for beauty gratified through the eyes? Were they not given for the enjoyment, for the teaching, at once high and sweet, of Nature and of Art? Art may be a moral and spiritual discipline. The ideas of Beauty from gifted minds by cunning hands transferred to, and stamped upon, outward things, come from the ancient and uncreated Beauty, whose beauty is as perfect as His truth and strength. Still further; in the lower life, and in its lawful use, there was intended to be a something of quiet satisfaction, a certain restfulness, at times making us happy and triumphant. And lo! for all this, not moderate fare and pure love, not thoughtful curiosity and the sweet pensiveness which is the best tribute to the beautiful—not a wise humility which makes us feel that our times are in God's hands and our means His continual gift—but degraded senses, low art, evil literature, a pride which is as grovelling as it is godless.

These three typical summaries of the evil tendencies in the exercise of free-will correspond with a remarkable fulness to the two narratives of trial which give us the compendium and general outline of all human temptation.

Our Lord's three temptations answer to this division.

The lust of the flesh is in essence the rebellion of the lower appetites, inherent to creaturely dependence, against the higher principle or law. The nearest and only conceivable approach to this in the sinless Man would be in His seeking lawful support by unlawful means—procuring food by a miraculous exertion of power, which only would have become sinful, or short of the highest goodness, by some condition of its exercise at that time and in that place. An appeal to the desire for beauty and glory, with an implied hint of using them for God's greater honour, is the essence of the second temptation; the one possible approximation to the "lust of the eyes" in that perfect character. The interior deception of some touch of pride in the visible support of angels wafting the Son of God through the air is Satan's one sinister way of insinuating to the Saviour something akin to "the pride of life."

In the case of the other earlier typical trials it will be observed that while the temptations fit into the same threefold framework, they are placed in an order which exactly reverses that of St. John. For in Eden the first approach is through "pride"; the magnificent promise of elevation in the scale of being, of the knowledge that would win the wonder of the spiritual world. "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."[1] The next step is that which directs the curiosity both of the senses and of the aspiring mind to the object forbidden—"when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise."[2] Then seems to have come

[1] Gen. iii. 5. [2] Gen. iii. 6.

some strange and sad rebellion of the lower nature, filling their souls with shame; some bitter revelation of the law of sin in their members; some knowledge that they were contaminated by the "lust of the flesh."[1] The order of the temptation in the narrative of Moses is historical; St. John's order is moral and spiritual, answering to the facts of life. The "lust of the flesh" which may approach the child through childish greed, grows apace. At first it is half unconscious; then it becomes coarse and palpable. In the man's desire acting with unregulated curiosity, through ambition of knowledge at any price, searching out for itself books and other instruments with deliberate desire to kindle lust, the "lust of the eyes" ceases not its fatal influence. The crowning sin of pride with its *selfishness*, which is self apart from God as well as from the brother, finds its place in the "pride of life."

III.

We may now be in a position to see more clearly against *what* world the Primate of early Christendom pronounced his anathema, and launched his interdict, and why?

What "world" did he denounce?

Clearly *not* the world as the creation, the universe. Not again the earth locally. God made and ordered all things. Why should we not love them with a holy and a blameless love? Only we should not love them in themselves; we should not cling to them forgetting Him. Suppose that some husband heaped beautiful and costly presents upon his wife whom he loved. At last with the intuition of love he begins to see what

[1] Gen. iii. 7.

is the secret of such cold imitation of love as that icy heart can give. She loves *him* not—his riches, not the man; his gifts, not the giver. And thus loving with that frigid love which has no heart in it, there is no true love; her heart is another's. Gifts are given that the giver may be loved in them. If it is true that "gifts are nought when givers prove unkind," it is also true that there is a sort of adultery of the heart when the taker is unkind—because the gift is valuable, not because the bestower is dear.[1] And so the world, God's beautiful world, now becomes to us an idol. If we are so lost in the possession of Nature, in the march of law, in the majestic growth, in the stars above and in the plants below, that we forget the Lawgiver, who from such humble beginnings has brought out a world of beauty and order; if with modern poets we find content, calm, happiness, purity, rest, simply in contemplating the glaciers, the waves, and the stars; then we look at the world even in this sense in a way which is a violation of St. John's rule. Yet again, the world which is now condemned is not humanity. There is no real Christianity in taking black views, and speaking bitter things, about the human society to which we belong, and the human nature of which we are partakers. No doubt Christianity believes that man "is very far gone from original righteousness;" that there is a "corruption in the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam." Yet the utterers of unwholesome apophthegms, the suspecters of their kind, are not Christian thinkers. The philosophic historian, whose gorge rose at the doctrine of the Fall, thought much worse of man practically

[1] S. Augustin., *Tract. in Joann. Epist.*

than the Fathers of the Church. They bowed before martyrdom and purity, and believed in them with a child-like faith. For Gibbon, the martyr was not quite so true, nor the virgin quite so pure, nor the saint quite so holy. He Who knew human nature best, Who has thrown that terrible ray of light into the unlit gulf of the heart when He tells us "what proceeds out of the heart of man,"[1] had yet the ear which was the first to hear the trembling of the one chord that yet kept healthful time and tune in the harlot's passionate heart. He believed that man was recoverable; lost, but capable of being found. After all, in this sense there is something worthy of love in man. "God so *loved*" (not so *hated*) "the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." Shall we say that *we* are to hate the world which He loved?

And now we come to that world which God never loved, never will love, never will reconcile to Himself,—which we are not to love.

This is most important to see; for there is always a danger in setting out with a stricter standard than Christ's, a narrower road than the narrow one which leads to heaven. Experience proves that they who begin with standards of duty which are impossibly high end with standards of duty which are sometimes sadly low. Such men have tried the impracticable, and failed; the practicable seems to be too hard for them ever afterwards. They who begin by anathematising the world in things innocent, indifferent, or even laudable, not rarely end by a reaction of thought which believes that the world is nothing and nowhere.

But there is such a thing as the world in St. John's sense—an evil world brought into existence by the abuse

[1] Mark vii. 21.

of our free-will; filled by the anti-trinity, by "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."

Let us not confuse "the world" with the earth, with the whole race of man, with general society, with any particular set, however much some sets are to be avoided. Look at the thing fairly. Two people, we will say, go to London, to live there. One, from circumstances of life and position, naturally falls into the highest social circle. Another has introductions to a smaller set, with an apparently more serious connection. Follow the first some evening. He drives to a great gathering. The room which he enters is ablaze with light; jewelled orders sparkle upon men's coats, and fair women move in exquisite dresses. We look at the scene and we say—"what worldly society has the man fallen into!" Perhaps so, in a sense. But about the same time the other walks to a little room with humbler adjuncts, where a grave and apparently serious circle meet together. We are able to look in there also, and we exclaim—"this is serious society, unworldly society." Perhaps so again. Yet let us read the letters of Mary Godolphin. She bore a life unspotted by the world in the dissolute court of Charles II., because the love of the Father was in her. In small serious circles are there no hidden lusts which blaze up in scandals? Is there no vanity, no pride, no hatred? In the world of Charles II.'s court Mary Godolphin lived out of the world which God hated; in the religious world not a few, certainly, live in the world which is not God's. For once more, the world is not so much a place—though at times its power seems to have been drawn into one intense focus, as in the empire of which Rome was the centre, and which may have been in the Apostle's thought in the following verse. In the truest and

deepest sense the world consists of our own spiritual surrounding; it is the place which we make for our own souls. No walls that ever were reared can shut out the world from us; the "Nun of Kenmare" found that it followed her into the seemingly spiritual retreat of a severe Order. The world in its essence is subtler and thinner than the most infinitesimal of the bacterian germs in the air. They can be strained off by the exquisite apparatus of a man of science. At a certain height they cease to exist. But the world may be wherever we are; we carry it with us wherever we go, it lasts while our lives last. No consecration can utterly banish it even from within the church's walls; it dares to be round us while we kneel, and follows us into the presence of God.

(2) Why does God hate this "world"—the world in this sense? St. John tells us. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Deep in every heart must be one or other of two loves. There is no room for two master-passions. There is an expulsive power in all true affection. What tenderness and pathos, how much of expostulation, more potent because reserved—"the love of the Father is not in him"! He has told all his "little ones" that he has written to them because they "know the Father." St. John does not use sacred names at random. Even Voltaire felt that there was something almost awful in hearing Newton pronounce the name of God. Such in an incomparably higher degree is the spirit of St. John. In this section he writes of "the love of the *Father*,"[1] and of the "will of *God*."[2] The first title has more sweetness than majesty; the second more majesty than

[1] 1 John ii. 15, 16. [2] Ibid. ver. 17.

sweetness.[1] He would throw into his plea some of the winningness of one who uses this as a resistless argument with a tempted but loving child—an argument often successful when every other fails. "If you do this, your Father will not love you; you will not be His child." We have but to read this with the hearts of God's dear children. Then we shall find that if the "love not" of this verse contains "words of extirpation;"[2] it ends with others which are intended to draw us with cords of a man, and with bands of love.

[1] No portion of Prof. Westcott's Commentary is more thorough or more exquisite than his exposition here. (*Epistles of St. John*, 66.)

[2] *Extirpantia verba.*" St. August. (in loc.).

DISCOURSE VII.

USE AND ABUSE OF THE SENSE OF THE VANITY OF THE WORLD.

"The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."—1 JOHN ii. 17.

THE connection of the passage in which these words occur is not difficult to trace, for those who are used to follow those "roots below the stream," those real rather than verbal links latent in the substance of St. John's thoughts. He addresses those whom he has in view with a paternal authority, as his "sons" in the faith—with an endearing variation as "little children." He reminds them of the wisdom and strength involved in their Christian life. Theirs is the sweetest flower of knowledge—"to know the Father." Theirs is the grandest crown of victory—"to overcome the wicked one." But there remains an enemy in one sense more dangerous than the evil one—the world. By the world in this place we are to understand that element in the material and human sphere, in the region of mingled good and evil, which is external to God, to the influence of His Spirit, to the boundaries of His Church—nay, which frequently passes over those boundaries. In this sense it is, so to speak, a fictitious world, a world of wills separated from God because dominated by self; a shadowy caricature of creation; an anti-kosmos, which the Author of the kosmos has not made. What has

been well called "the great love not" rings out—"love not the world." For this admonition two reasons of ever enduring validity are given by St. John. (1) The application of the law of human nature, that two master-passions cannot co-exist in one man. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (2) The unsatisfactory nature of the world, its incurable transitoriness, its "visible tendency to non-existence." "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof."

It will be well to consider how far this thought of the transitoriness of the world, of its drifting by in ceaseless change, is in itself salutary and Christian, how far it needs to be supplemented and elevated by that which follows and closes the verse.[1]

I.

There can be no doubt, then, that up to a certain point this conviction is a necessary element of Christian thought, feeling, and character; that it is at least among the preliminaries of a saving reception of Christ.

There is in the great majority of the world a surprising and almost incredible levity. There is a disposition to believe in the permanency of that which we have known to continue long, and which has become habitual. There is a tale of a man who was resolved

[1] *παράγεται.* It has been said that this is not the real point; that what St. John here describes is not the general attribute of the world as transitory, but its condition at the moment when the Epistle was written, in presence of the manifestation of "the kingdom of God, which was daily shining forth." But surely the world can scarcely be so completely identified with the temporary framework of the Roman Empire; and the *universality* of the antithesis (*ὁ δὲ ποιῶν κ.τ.λ.*) and its intensely *individual* form, lead us to take *κόσμος* in that universal and inclusive signification which alone is of abiding interest to every age.

to keep from his children the knowledge of *death*. He was the Governor of a colony, and had lost in succession his wife and many children. Two only, mere infants, were left. He withdrew to a beautiful and secluded island, and tried to barricade his daughters from the fatal knowledge which, when once acquired, darkens the spirit with anticipation. In the ocean-island death was to be a forbidden word. If met with in the pages of a book, and questions were asked, no answer was to be given. If some one expired, the body was to be removed, and the children were to be told that the departed had gone to another country. It does not need much imagination to feel sure that the secret could not be kept; that some fish on the coral reef, or some bright bird in the tropic forest, gave the little ones the hint of a something that touched the splendour of the sunset with a strange presentiment; that some hour came when, as to the rest of us, so to them, the mute presence would insist upon being made known. Ours is a stranger mode of dealing with ourselves than was the father's way of dealing with his children. We tacitly resolve to play a game of make-believe with ourselves, to forget that which cannot be forgotten, to remove to an incalculable distance that which is inexorably near. And the fear of death with us does not come from the nerves, but from the will. Death ushers us into the presence of God. Those of whom we speak hate and fear death because they fear God, and hate His presence. Now it is necessary for such persons as these to be awakened from their illusion. That which is supremely important for them is to realise that "the world" is indeed "drifting by;" that there is an emptiness in all that is created, a vanity in all that is not eternal; that time is short, eternity long.

They must be brought to see that with the world, the "lust thereof" (the concupiscence, the lust of it, which has the world for its object, which belongs to it, and which the world stimulates) passes by also. The world, which is object of the desire, is a phantom and a shadow; the desire itself must be therefore the phantom of a phantom and the shadow of a shadow.

This conviction has a thousand times over led human souls to the one true abiding centre of eternal reality. It has come in a thousand ways. It has been said that one heard the fifth chapter of Genesis read, with those words eight times repeated over the close of each record of longevity, like the strokes of a funeral bell, "*and he died;*" and that the impression never left him, until he planted his foot upon the rock over the tide of the changing years. Sometimes this conviction is produced by the death of friends—sometimes by the slow discipline of life—sometimes no doubt it may be begun, sometimes deepened, by the preacher's voice upon the watch-night, by the effective ritualism of the tolling bell, of the silent prayer, of the well-selected hymn. And it is right that the world's dancing in, or drinking in, the New Year, should be a hint to Christians to pray it in. This is one of the happy plagiarisms which the Church has made from the world. The heart feels as it never did before the truth of St. John's sad, calm, oracular survey of existence. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof."

II.

But we have not sounded the depth of the truth—certainly we have not exhausted St. John's meaning—until we have asked something more. Is this conviction alone always a herald of salvation? Is it

always, taken by itself, even salutary? Can it never be exaggerated, and become the parent of evils almost greater than those which it supersedes?

We are led by careful study of the Bible to conclude that this sentiment of the flux of things *is* capable of exaggeration. For there is one important principle which arises from a comparison of the Old Testament with the New in this matter.

It is to be noticed that the Old Testament has indefinitely more which corresponds to the first proposition of the text, without the qualification which follows it, than we can find in the New.

The patriarch Job's experience echoes in our ears "Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay."[1] The Funeral Psalms make their melancholy chant. "Behold, Thou hast made my days as it were a span long. . . . Verily every man living is altogether vanity. For man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain. . . . O spare me a little that I may smile again."[2] Or we read the words of Moses, the man of God, in that ancient psalm of his, that hymn of time and of eternity. All that human speech can say is summed up in four words, the truest, the deepest, the saddest and the most expressive, that ever fell from any mortal pen. "We bring our years to an end, as a sigh."[3] Each life is a sigh between two eternities!

Our point is, that in the New Testament there is greatly less of this element—greatly less of this pathetic moralising upon the vanity and fragility of human life,

[1] Job xiv. 1, 2. Cf. x. 20-22.

[2] Such seems to be the meaning of אַבְלִינָה (Ps. xxxix. 14).

[3] Ps. xc. 9.

of which we have only cited a few examples—and that what there is lies in a different atmosphere, with sunnier and more cheerful surroundings. Indeed, in the whole compass of the New Testament there is perhaps but one passage which is set quite in the same key with our familiar declamations upon the uncertainty and shortness of human life—where St. James desires Christians ever to remember in all their projects to make deduction for the will of God, "not knowing what shall be on the morrow."[1] In the New Testament the voice, which wails for a second about the changefulness and misery, is lost in the triumphant music by which it is encompassed. If earthly goods are depreciated, it is not merely because "the load of them troubles, the love of them taints, the loss of them tortures;"[2] it is because better things are ready. There is no lamentation over the change, no clinging to the dead past. The tone is rather one of joyful invitation. "Your raft is going to pieces in the troubled sea of time; step into a gallant ship. The volcanic isle on which you stand is undermined by silent fires; we can promise to bring you with us to a shore of safety where you shall be compassed about with songs of deliverance."

It is no doubt true to urge that this style of thought and language is partly to be ascribed to a desire that the attention of Christians should be fixed on the return of their Lord, rather than upon their own death. But,

[1] James iv. 13-17. The passage 1 Pet. i. 25 is taken from the magnificent prophecy in which the fragility of all flesh, transitory as the falling away of the flowers of grass into impalpable dust, is contrasted with the eternity of the word of God. Isa. xl. 6, 7, LXX.

[2] "Possessa onerant, amata inquinant, amissa cruciant."—*St. Bernard.*

if we believe Scripture to have been written under Divine guidance, the history of religion may supply us with good grounds for the absence of all exaggeration from its pages in speaking of the misery of life and the transitoriness of the world.

The largest religious experiment in the world, the history of a religion which at one time numerically exceeded Christendom, is a gigantic proof that it is *not* safe to allow unlimited licence to melancholy speculation. The true symbol for humanity is not a skull and an hour glass.

Some two thousand five hundred years ago, towards the end of the seventh century before Christ, at the foot of the mountains of Nepaul, in the capital of a kingdom of Central India, an infant was born whom the world will never forget. All gifts seemed to be showered on this child. He was the son of a powerful king and heir to his throne. The young Siddhârtha was of rare distinction, brave and beautiful, a thinker and a hero, married to an amiable and fascinating princess. But neither a great position nor domestic happiness could clear away the cloud of melancholy which hung over Siddhârtha, even under that lovely sky. His deep and meditative soul dwelt night and day upon the mystery of existence. He came to the conclusion that the life of the creature is incurably evil from three causes—the very fact of existence, desire, and ignorance. The things revealed by sense are evil. None has that continuance and fixity which are the marks of *Law*, and the attainment of which is the condition of happiness. At last his resolution to leave all his splendour and become an ascetic was irrevocably fixed. One splendid morning the prince drove to a glorious garden. On his road he met a repulsive old

man, wrinkled, toothless, bent. Another day, a wretched being wasted with fever crossed his path. Yet a third excursion—and a funeral passes along the road with a corpse on an open bier, and friends wailing as they go. His favourite attendant is obliged in each case to confess that these evils are not exceptional—that old age, sickness, and death, are the fatal conditions of conscious existence for all the sons of men. Then the Prince Royal takes his first step towards becoming the deliverer of humanity. He cries—"woe, woe to the youth which old age must destroy, to the health which sickness must undermine, to the life which has so few days and is so full of evil." Hasty readers are apt to judge that the Prince was on the same track with the Patriarch of Idumea, and with Moses the man of God in the desert—nay, with St. John, when he writes from Ephesus that "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof."

It may be well to reconsider this; to see what contradictory principle lies under utterances which have so much superficial resemblance.

Siddhârtha became known as the Bouddha, the august founder of a great and ancient religion. That religion has of later years been favourably compared with Christianity—yet what are its necessary results, as drawn out for us by those who have studied it most deeply? Scepticism, fanatic hatred of life, incurable sadness in a world fearfully misunderstood; rejection of the personality of man, of God, of the reality of Nature. Strange enigma! The Bouddha sought to win annihilation by good works; everlasting non-being by a life of purity, of alms, of renunciation, of austerity. The prize of his high calling was not everlasting life, but everlasting death; for what else is

impersonality, unconsciousness, absorption into the universe, but the negation of human existence? The acceptance of the principles of Bouddhism is simply a sentence of death intellectually, morally, spiritually, almost physically, passed upon the race which submits to the melancholy bondage of its creed of desolation. It is the opium drunkenness of the spiritual world without the dreams that are its temporary consolation. It is enervating without being soft, and contemplative without being profound. It is a religion which is spiritual without recognising the soul, virtuous without the conception of duty, moral without the admission of liberty, charitable without love. It surveys a world without nature, and a universe without God.[1] The human soul under its influence is not so much drunken as asphyxiated by a monotonous unbalanced perpetual repetition of one half of the truth—"the world passeth away, and the lust thereof."

For let us carefully note that St. John adds a qualification which preserves the balance of truth. Over against the dreary contemplation of the perpetual flux of things, he sets a constant course of *doing*—over against the *world*, God in His deepest, truest personality, "*the will of God*"—over against the fact of our having a short time to live, and being full of misery, an everlasting *fixity*, "*he abideth for ever*"—(so well brought out by the old gloss which slipped into the Latin text, "even as God abideth for ever"). As the Lord had taught before, so the disciple now teaches, of the rock-like solidity, of the permanent abiding, under and over him who "*doeth*." Of the devotee who became in his

[1] The view here taken of Bouddhism follows that of M. J. Barthelemy St. Hilaire. *Le Bouddha et sa Réligion.* Prémière partie, chap v., pp. 141-182.

turn the Bouddha, Çakhya-Mouni could not have said one word of the close of our text. "*He*"—but human personality is lost in the triumph of knowledge. "*Doeth the will of God*"—but God is ignored, if not denied.[1] "*Abideth for ever*"—but that is precisely the object of his aversion, the terror from which he wishes to be emancipated at any price, by any self-denial.

It may be supposed that this strain of thought is of little practical importance. It may be of use, indeed, in other lands to the missionary who is brought into contact with forms of Bouddhism in China, India, or Ceylon, but not to us in these countries. In truth it is not so. It is about half a century ago since a great English theologian warned his University that the central principle of Bouddhism was being spread far and wide in Europe from Berlin. This propaganda is not confined to philosophy. It is at work in literature generally, in poetry, in novels, above all in those collections of "Pensées" which have become so extensively popular. The unbelief of the last century advanced with flashing epigrams and defiant songs. With Byron it softened at times into a melancholy which was perhaps partly affected. But with Amiel, and others of our own day, unbelief assumes a sweet and dirge-like tone. The satanic mirth of the past unbelief is exchanged for a satanic melancholy in the present. Many currents of thought run into our hearts, and all are tinged with a darkness before unknown from new substances in the soil which colours the waters. There

[1] "These populations neither deny nor affirm God. They simply ignore Him. To assert that they are atheists would be very much the same thing as to assert that they are anti-Cartesians. As they are neither for nor against Descartes, so they are neither for nor against God. They are just children. A child is neither atheist nor deist. He is nothing."—Voltaire, *Dict. Phil.*, Art. *Athéisme.*

is little fear of our not hearing enough, great fear of our hearing too much, of the proposition—"the world passeth away, and the lust thereof."

All this may possibly serve as some explanation for the fact that the Christian Church, as such, has no fast for the last day of the year, no festival for New Year's Day except one quite unconnected with the lessons which may be drawn from the flight of time. The death of the old year, the birth of the new year, have touching associations for us. But the Church consecrates no death but that of Jesus and His martyrs, no nativity but that of her Lord, and of one whose birth was directly connected with His own—John the Baptist.[1] A cause of this has been found in the fact that the day had become so deeply contaminated by the abominations of the heathen *Saturnalia* that it was impossible in the early Church to continue any very marked observation of it. This may well be so; but it is worth considering whether there is not another and deeper reason. Nothing that has now been said can be supposed to militate against the observance of this time by Christians in private, with solemn penitence for the transgressions of the past year, and earnest prayer for that upon which we enter—nothing against the edification of particular congregations by such services as those most striking

[1] It is noteworthy that in the collects in the English Prayer-Book, and indeed in its public formularies generally (outside the Funeral Service, and that for the Visitation of the Sick), there are but two places in which the note of the "world passeth away" is very prominently struck, viz., the Collect for the Fourth Sunday after Easter, and one portion of the prayer for "The Church Militant." One of the most wholesome and beautiful expressions of the salutary convictions arising from Christian perception of this melancholy truth is to be found in Dr. Johnson's "Prayer for the Last Day in the Year," as given in Mr. Stobart's *Daily Services for Christian Households*, pp. 99, 100.

ones which are held in so many places. But some explanation is supplied why the "Watch-night" is not recognised in the calendar of the Church.

Let us take our verse together as a whole and we have something better than moralising over the flight of time and the transitoriness of the world; something better than vulgarising "vanity of vanities" by vapid iteration.

It is hard to conceive a life in which death and evanescence have nothing that enforces their recognition. Now the removal of one dear to us, now a glance at the obituary with the name of some one of almost the same age as ourselves, brings a sudden shadow over the sunniest field. Yet surely it is not wholesome to encourage the perpetual presence of the cloud. We might impose upon ourselves the penance of being shut up all a winter's night with a corpse, go half crazy with terror of that unearthly presence, and yet be no more spiritual after all. We must learn to look at death in a different way, with new eyes. We all know how different dead faces are. Some speak to us merely of material ugliness, of the sweep of "decay's effacing fingers." In others a new idea seems to light up the face; there is the touch of a superhuman irradiation, of a beauty from a hidden life. We feel that we look on one who has seen Christ, and say—"we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." These two kinds of faces answer to the two different views of life.

Not the transitory, but the permanent; not the fleeting, but the abiding; not death but life, is the conclusion of the whole matter. The Christian life is not an initial spasm followed by a chronic dyspepsia. What does St. John give us as the picture of it

exemplified in a believer? Daily, perpetual, constant doing the will of God. This is the end far beyond—somewhat inconsistent with—obstinately morbid meditation and surrounding ourselves with multiplied images of mortality. Lying in a coffin half the night might not lead to that end; nay, it might be a hindrance thereto. Beyond the grave, outside the coffin, is the object at which we are to look. "The current of things temporal," cries Augustine, "sweeps along. But like a tree over that stream has risen our Lord Jesus Christ. He willed to plant Himself as it were over the river. Are you whirled along by the current? Lay hold of the wood. Does the love of the world roll you onward in its course? Lay hold upon Christ. For you He became temporal that you might become eternal. For He was so made temporal as to remain eternal. Join thy heart to the eternity of God, and thou shalt be eternal with Him."

Those who have heard the Miserere in the Sistine Chapel describe the desolation which settles upon the soul which surrenders itself to the impression of the ritual. As the psalm proceeds, at the end of each rhythmical pulsation of thought, each beat of the alternate wings of the parallelism, a light upon the altar is extinguished. As the wail grows sadder the darkness grows deeper. When all the lights are out and the last echo of the strain dies away, there would be something suitable for the penitent's mood in the words—"the world passeth away, and the lust thereof." Upon the altar of the Christian heart there are tapers at first unlighted, and before it a priest in black vestments. But one by one the vestments are exchanged for others which are white; one after another the lamps are lighted slowly and without noise, until gradually, we know not how,

the whole place is full of light. And ever sweeter and clearer, calm and happy, with a triumph which is at first repressed and reverential, but which increases as the light becomes diffused, the words are heard strong and quiet—a plain-song now that will swell into an anthem presently—"he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

NOTES.

Ch. ii. 12-17.

Ver. 12, 13, 14. These verses cannot properly be divided so as to embrace three departments of spiritual, answering to three departments of natural, life. All believers are addressed *authoritatively* as "children" in the faith, *tenderly* as "little children;" then subdivided into two classes only, "fathers," and "young men."

Ver. 16. Hardy's comment is quaint, and interesting. "These three are 'all that is in the world;' they are the world's cursed trinity; according to that of the poet,

> Ambitiosus honos, opes, et fœda voluptas;
> Hæc tria pro trino numine mundus habet,

which wicked men adore and worship as deities; in which regard Lapide opposeth them to the three persons in the blessed Trinity: the lust of the eyes to the Father, who is liberal in communicating His essence to the Son and the Spirit; the lust of the flesh to the Son, whose generation is spiritual and eternal; the pride of life to the Holy Ghost, who is the Spirit of humility. That golden calf, which, being made, was set up and worshipped by the Israelites in the wilderness, is not unfitly made use of to represent these: the calf, which is a wanton creature, an emblem of the lust of flesh; the gold of the calf, referring to the lust of the eyes; and the exalting it, to the pride of life. Oh, how do the most of men fall down before this golden calf which the world erecteth."

In tracing the various senses of "the world" we have not dwelt prominently upon the conception of the world as embodied

in the Roman Empire, and in the city of Rome as its seat—an empire standing over against the Church as the Kingdom of God. The *ἀλαζονία τοῦ βίου* may be projected outwardly, and set in a material framework in the gorgeous description of the wealth and luxury of Rome in Apoc. xviii. 11-14. M. Rénan finds in the Apocalypse the cry of horror of a witness who has been at Rome, seen the martyrdom of brethren, and been himself near death. (Apoc. i. 9, vi. 9, xiii. 10, xx. 4; cf. *L'Antechrist*, pp. 197, 199. Surely Apoc xviii. 20 adds a strong testimony to the martyrdom of Peter and Paul at Rome.) So early a witness as Tertullian gives the story of St. John's having been plunged into the boiling oil without injury to him before his exile at Patmos. (*De Præscr. Hær.*, 36). The Apocryphal 'Acta Iohannis' (known to Eusebius and to St. Augustine), relates at length an interview at Rome between Domitian and St. John—not without interest, in spite of some miraculous embellishment. *Acta. Apost. Apoc.* Tischendorf, 266-271.

GREEK.

Παιδία, ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν· καὶ καθὼς ἠκούσατε ὅτι ὁ ἀντίχριστος ἔρχεται, καὶ νῦν ἀντίχριστοι πολλοὶ γεγόνασιν· ὅθεν γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν. Ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐξῆλθαν, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἦσαν ἐξ ἡμῶν. εἰ γὰρ ἐξ ἡμῶν ἦσαν, μεμενήκεισαν ἂν μεθ' ἡμῶν· ἀλλ' ἵνα φανερωθῶσιν ὅτι οὐκ εἰσὶν πάντες ἐξ ἡμῶν. Καὶ ὑμεῖς χρίσμα ἔχετε ἀπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου, καὶ οἴδατε πάντα. οὐκ ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, ὅτι οὐκ οἴδατε τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ἀλλ' ὅτι οἴδατε αὐτήν, καὶ ὅτι πᾶν ψεῦδος ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας οὐκ ἔστιν. Τίς ἐστιν ὁ ψεύστης, εἰ μὴ ὁ ἀρνούμενος ὅτι Ἰησοῦς οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ Χριστός; οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀντίχριστος, ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱόν. πᾶς ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν υἱόν, οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει. ὁ ὁμολογῶν τὸν υἱὸν καὶ τὸν πάτερα ἔχει. Ὑμεῖς ὃ ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς,

LATIN.

Filioli, novissima hora est: et sicut audistis quia antichristus venit, nunc autem antichristi multi facti sunt, unde scimus quia novissima hora est. Ex nobis prodierunt, sed non erant ex nobis, nam si fuissent ex nobis, permansissent utique nobiscum; sed ut manifesti sint quoniam non sunt omnes ex nobis. Sed vos unctionem habetis a Sancto, et nostis omnia. Non scripsi vobis quasi ignorantibus veritatem, sed quasi scientibus eam, et quoniam omne mendacium ex veritate non est. Quis est mendax, nisi qui negat quoniam Iesus non est Christus? Hic est antichristus, qui negat Patrem et Filium. Omnis qui negat Filium nec Patrem habet: qui confitetur Filium, et Patrem habet. Vos quod audistis ab initio, in vobis permaneat.

AUTHORISED VERSION.

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [*but*] *he*

REVISED VERSION.

Little children, it is the last hour: and as ye heard that antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest how that they are not of us. And ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and because no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, *even* he that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the

ANOTHER VERSION.

Little children, it is a last hour; and as ye heard that antichrist cometh, so now many antichrists are in existence; whereby we know that it is a last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us they would have continued with us: but that they might be made manifest how that all are not of us, *they went out.* But ye have unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you *this*—"ye know not the truth"—but *this*—"ye know it," and *this*—"every lie is not from the truth." Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? The antichrist is this, he that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son the same hath not the Father; he that con-

ἐν ὑμῖν μενέτω. ἐὰν ἐν ὑμῖν μείνῃ ὃ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ἠκούσατε, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐν τῷ υἱῷ καὶ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ μενεῖτε. καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐπαγγελία, ἣν αὐτὸς ἐπηγγείλατο ἡμῖν, τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον. ταῦτα ἔγραψα ὑμῖν περὶ τῶν πλανώντων ὑμᾶς. Καὶ ὑμεῖς τὸ χρῖσμα ὃ ἐλάβατε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, μένει ἐν ὑμῖν, καὶ οὐ χρείαν ἔχετε ἵνα τις διδάσκῃ ὑμᾶς· ἀλλ' ὡς τὸ αὐτοῦ χρῖσμα διδάσκει ὑμᾶς περὶ πάντων, καὶ ἀληθές ἐστιν, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ψεῦδος· καὶ καθὼς ἐδίδαξεν ὑμᾶς, μενεῖτε ἐν αὐτῷ. Καὶ νῦν, τεκνία, μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ· ἵνα ὅταν φανερωθῇ, σχῶμεν παρρησίαν, καὶ μὴ αἰσχυνθῶμεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ.

Si in vobis permanserit quod ab initio audistis, et vos in Filio et Patre manebitis. Et hæc est promissio quam ipse pollicitus est vobis, vitam æternam. Hæc scripti vobis de his qui seducunt vos. Et vos unctionem quam accepistis ab eo, maneat in vobis; et non necesse habetis ut aliquis doceat vos, sed sicut unctio eius docet vos de omnibus, et verum est, et non est mendacium, et sicut docuit vos manete in eo. Et nunc, filioli, manete in eo, ut cum apparuerit habemus fiduciam, et non confundamur ab eo in adventu eius.

that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that He hath promised us, *even* eternal life. These *things* have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him. And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

Father: he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also. As for you, let that abide in you which ye heard from the beginning. If that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise which He promised us, *even* the life eternal. These things have I written unto you concerning them that would lead you astray. And as for you, the anointing which ye received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you; but as His anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, ye abide in Him. And now, *my* little children, abide in Him; that, if He shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

fesseth the Son also hath the Father. As for you—that which ye heard from the beginning let it abide in you. If that abide in you which from the beginning ye heard, ye also shall abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise which He promised us, the life, the eternal *life*. These things have I written unto you concerning those that would mislead you. And as for you—the anointing which ye received from Him abideth in you, and ye have no need that any be teaching you: but as His unction is teaching you continually concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and as it taught you, so shall ye abide in Him. And now, children, abide in Him, that if He shall be manifested we may have boldness and not shrink in shame from Him in His coming.

DISCOURSE VIII.

KNOWING ALL THINGS.

"But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."—1 JOHN ii. 20.

THERE is little of the form of logical argument to which Western readers are habituated in the writings of St. John, steeped as his mind was in Hebraic influences. The inferential "therefore" is not to be found in this Epistle.[1] Yet the diligent reader

[1] The *οὖν* in ver. 24 is not recognised by the R. V. nor adopted in Professor Westcott's text. One uncial (A), however, inserts it in 1 John iv. 19. It occurs in 3 John 8. This inferential particle is found with unusual frequency in St. John's Gospel. It does not seem satisfactory to account for this by calling it "one of the beginnings of modern Greek." (B. de Xivrey.) By St. John as an *historian*, the frequent *therefore* is the spontaneous recognition of a Divine logic of events; of the necessary yet natural sequence of every incident in the life of the "Word made Flesh." The *οὖν* expresses something more than continuity of narrative. It indicates a connection of events so interlinked that each springs from, and is joined with, the preceding, as if it were a conclusion which followed from the premiss of the Divine argument. Now a mind which views *history* in this light is just the mind which will be *dogmatic* in theology. The inspired dogmatic theologian will necessarily write in a style different from that of the theologian of the Schools. The style of the former will be *oracular;* that of the latter will be *scholastic, i.e.*, inferential, a concatenation of syllogisms. The syllogistic *οὖν* is then naturally absent from St. John's Epistles. The one undoubted exception is 3 John 8, where a practical inference is drawn from an historical statement in ver. 7. The writer may be allowed to refer to *The Speaker's Commentary*, iv., 381.

or expositor finds it more difficult to detach any single sentence, without loss to the general meaning, than in any other writing of the New Testament. The sentence may look almost as if its letters were graven brief and large upon a block of marble, and stood out in oracular isolation—but upon reverent study it will be found that the seemingly lapidary inscription is one of a series with each of which it is indissolubly connected—sometimes limited, sometimes enlarged, always coloured and influenced by that which precedes and follows.

It is peculiarly needful to bear this observation in mind in considering fully the almost startling principle stated in the verse which is prefixed to this discourse. A kind of spiritual omniscience appears to be attributed to believers. Catechisms, confessions, creeds, teachers, preachers, seem to be superseded by a stroke of the Apostle's pen, by what we are half tempted to consider as a magnificent exaggeration. The text sounds as if it outstripped even the fulfilment of the promise of the new covenant contained in Jeremiah's prophecy—"they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them."[1]

The passages just before and after St. John's splendid annunciation[2] in our text are occupied with the subject of Antichrist, here first mentioned in Scripture. In this section of our Epistle Antichrist is (1) *revealed*, and (2) *refuted*.

(1) Antichrist is revealed by the very crisis which the Church was then traversing. From this especially, from the transitory character of a world drifting by

[1] Jer. xxxi. 34. [2] Vers. 18, 22.

them in unceasing mutation, the Apostle is led to consider this as one of those crisis-hours of the Church's history, each of which may be the last hour, and which is assuredly—in the language of primitive Christianity—a last hour. The Apostle therefore exclaims with fatherly affection—"Little children, it is a last hour."[1]

Deep in the heart of the Apostolic Church, because it came from those who had received it from Christ, there was one awful anticipation. St. John in this passage gives it a name. He remembers Who had told the Jews that "if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive."[2] He can announce to them that "as ye have heard this Antichrist cometh, even so now" (precisely as ye have heard) "many antichrists have come into existence and are around you, whereby we know that it is a last hour." The *name* Antichrist occurs only in these Epistles, and seems purposely intended to denote both one who occupies the place of Christ, and one who is against Christ. In "the Antichrist" the antichristian principle is personally concentrated. The conception of representative-men is one which has become familiar to modern students of the philosophy of history. Such representative-men, at once the products of the past, moulders of the present,

[1] The last hour is not a date arbitrarily chosen and written down as a man might mark a day for an engagement in a calendar. It is determined by history—by the sum-total of the product of the actions of men who are not the slaves of fatality, who possess free-will, and are not forced to act in a particular way. It is supposed to derogate from the Divine mission of the Apostles if we admit that they might be mistaken as to the chronology of the closing hour of time. But to know that supreme instant would involve a knowledge of the whole plan of God and the whole predetermining motives in the appointment of that day, *i.e.*, it would constructively involve *omniscience*. Cf. Mark xiii. 32, and our Lord's profound saying, Acts i. 7.

[2] John v. 43.

and creative of the future, sum up in themselves tendencies and principles good and evil, and project them in a form equally compacted and intensified into the coming generations. Shadows and anticipations of Antichrist the holiest of the Church's sons have sometimes seen, even in the high places of the Church. But it is evident that as yet the Antichrist has not come. For wherever St. John mentions this fearful impersonation of evil, he connects the manifestation of his influence with absolute denial of the true Manhood, of the Messiahship, of the everlasting sonship of Jesus, of the Father, Who is His and our Father.[1] In negation of the Personality of God, in the substitution of a glittering but unreal idea of human goodness and active philanthropy for the historical Christ, we of this age may not improbably hear his advancing footsteps, and foresee the advent of a day when antichristianity shall find its great representative-man.

(2) Antichrist is also refuted by a principle common to the life of Christians and by its result.

The principle by which he is refuted is a gift of insight lodged in the Church at large, and partaken of by all faithful souls.

A hint of a solemn crisis had been conveyed to the Christians of Asia Minor by secessions from the great Christian community. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us (which they did not, but went out) that they might be made manifest that not all are of us."[2] Not only this. "Yea further, ye yourselves have a hallowing oil from Him who is hallowed, a chrism from the Christ, an unction from the Holy One,

[1] 1 John ii. 22, iv. 2, 3; 2 John 7-9.

[2] Ver. 19.

even from the Son of God." Chrism (as we are reminded by the most accurate of scholars) is always the *material* with which anointing is performed, never the *act* of anointing; it points to the unction of prophets, priests and kings under the Old Testament, in whose sacrifices and mystic language oil symbolises the Holy Spirit as the spirit of joy and freedom. Quite possibly there may be some allusion to a literal use of oil in Baptism and Confirmation, which began at a very early period;[1] though it is equally possible that the material may have arisen from the spiritual, and not in the reverse order. But beyond all question the real predominant reference is to the Holy Ghost. In the chrism here mentioned there is a feature characteristic of St. John's style. For there is first a faint prelusive note which (as we find in several other important subjects[2]) is faintly struck and seems to die away, but is afterwards taken up, and more fully brought out. The full distinct mention of the Holy Spirit comes like a burst of the music of the "Veni Creator," carrying on the fainter prelude when it might seem to have been almost lost. The first reverential, almost timid hint, is succeeded by another, brief but significant—almost dogmatically expressive of the relation of the Holy Spirit to Christ as *His* Chrism, "the Chrism of Him."[3] We shall presently have a direct mention of the Holy Ghost. "Hereby we know

[1] Bingham's *Antiquities.*, i., 462-524, 565.

[2] For other instances of this characteristic, see a subject *introduced* ii. 29, *expanded* iii. 9—another subject *introduced* iii. 21, *expanded* v. 14.

[3] *τὸ αὐτοῦ χρῖσμα*, ver. 27, *not τὸ αὐτό* ("the same anointing," A. V.) "This most unusual order throws a strong emphasis on the pronoun." (Prof. Westcott.) The writer thankfully quotes this as it seems to him to bring out the dogmatic significance of the word, emphasised as it is by this unusual order—the chrism, the Spirit of *Him*.

that He abideth in us, from the Spirit which He gave us."[1]

Antichrist is refuted by a result of this great principle of the life of the Holy Spirit in the living Church. "Ye have" chrism from the Christ; Antichrist shall not lay his unhallowing disanointing hand upon you. As a result of this, "ye know all things."[2]

How are we to understand this startling expression?

If we receive any teachers as messengers commissioned by God, it is evident that their message must be communicated to us through the medium of human language. They come to us with minds that have been in contact with a *Mind* of infinite knowledge, and deliver utterances of universal import. They are therefore under an obligation to use language which is capable of being misunderstood by some persons. Our Lord and His Apostles so spoke at times. Two very different classes of men constantly misinterpret words like those of our text. The rationalist does so with a sinister smile; the fanatic with a cry of hysterical triumph. The first may point his epigram with effective reference to the exaggerated promise which is belied by the ignorance of so many ardent believers; the second may advance his absurd claim to personal infallibility in all things spiritual. Yet an Apostle calmly says—"ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." This, however, is but another

[1] 1 John iii. 24.

[2] The reading of the A. V. is received into Tischendorf's text and adopted by the R. V. Another reading omits καί and substitutes πάντες for πάντα so that the passage would run thus, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One. Ye all know (I have not written unto you because ye know not) the truth." As far as the difficulty of πάντα is concerned, nothing is gained by the change, as the statement recurs in a slightly varied form in ver. 27.

asterisk directing the eye to the Master's promise in the Gospel, which is at once the warrant and the explanation of the utterance here. "The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall *teach you all things*, and bring all things to your remembrance, *whatsoever I have said unto you*."[1] The express limitation of the Saviour's promise is the implied limitation of St. John's statement. "The Holy Ghost has been sent, according to this unfailing pledge. He teaches you (and, if He teaches, you know) all things which Christ has said, as far as their substance is written down in a true record—all things of the new creation spoken by our Lord, preserved by the help of the Spirit in the memories of chosen witnesses with unfading freshness, by the same Spirit unfolded and interpreted to you."

We should observe in what spirit and to whom St. John speaks.

He does not speak in the strain which would be adopted by a missionary in addressing men lately brought out of heathenism into the fold of Christ. He does not like a modern preacher or tract-writer at once divide his observations into two parts, one for the converted, one for the unconverted; all are his 'dear ones" as beloved, his "sons" as brought into close spiritual relationship with himself. He classes them simply as young and old, with their respective graces of strength and knowledge. All are looked upon as "abiding"; almost the one exhortation is to abide unto the end in a condition upon which all have already entered, and in which some have long continued. We feel throughout the calmness and assurance of a spiritual

[1] John xiv. 26.

teacher writing to Christian men who had either been born in the atmosphere of Christian tradition, or had lived in it for many years. They are again and again appealed to on the ground of a common Christian confidence—"we know." They have all the articles of the Christian creed, the great inheritance of a faithful summary of the words and works of Christ. The Gospel which Paul at first preached in Asia Minor was the starting point of the truth which remained among them, illustrated, expanded, applied, but absolutely unaltered.[1] What the Christians whom St. John has in view really want is the revival of familiar truths, not the impartation of new. No spiritual voyage of discovery is needed; they have only to explore well-known regions. The memory and the affections must be stimulated. The truths which have become "cramped and bed-ridden" in the dormitory of the soul must acquire elasticity from exercise. The accumulation of ashes must be blown away, and the spark of fire beneath fanned into flame. This capacity of revival, of expansion, of quickened life, of developed truth, is in the unction common to the faithful, in the latent possibilities of the new birth. The same verse to which we have before referred as the best interpreter of this should be consulted again.[2] There is an instructive distinction between the tenses—"as His unction *is teaching*"—"as it *taught* you."[3] The teaching

[1] "Let that abide in you which ye heard from the beginning," 1 John ii. 24. Cf. "Testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand," 1 Pet. v. 12. "Even as our beloved brother Paul has written unto you," 2 Pet. iii. 15. St. Paul has thus the attestation of St. John as well as of St. Peter.

[2] Ver. 27

[3] διδάσκει—ἐδίδαξεν.

was once for all, the creed definite and fixed, the body of truth a sum-total looked upon as one. "The unction *taught*." Once for all the Holy Spirit made known the Incarnation and stamped the recorded words of Christ with His seal. But there are depths of thought about His person which need to be reverently explored. There is an energy in His work which was not exhausted in the few years of its doing, and which is not imprisoned within the brief chronicle in which it is written. There is a spirit and a life in His words. In one aspect they have the strength of the tornado, which advances in a narrow line; but every foot of the column, as if armed with a tooth of steel, grinds and cuts into pieces all which resists it. Those words have also depths of tenderness, depths of wisdom, into which eighteen centuries have looked down and never yet seen the last of their meaning. Advancing time does but broaden the interpretation of the wisdom and the sympathy of those words. Applications of their significance are being discovered by Christian souls in forms as new and manifold as the claims of human need. The Church collectively is like one sanctified mind meditating incessantly upon the Incarnation; attaining more and more to an understanding of that character as it widens in a circle of glory round the form of its historical manifestation—considering how those words may be applied not only to self but to humanity. The new wants of each successive generation bring new help out of that inexhaustible store. The Church may have "decided opinions"; but she has not the "deep slumber" which is said to accompany them. How can *she* be fast asleep who is ever learning from a teacher Who is always supplying her with fresh and varied lessons? The Church must be ever learng,in

because the anointing which "taught" once for all is also ever "teaching."

This profound saying is therefore chiefly true of Christians as a whole. Yet each individual believer may surely have a part in it. "There is a teacher in the heart who has also a chair in heaven." "The Holy Spirit who dwells in the justified soul," says a pious writer, "is a great director." May we not add that He is a great catechist? In difficulties, whether worldly, intellectual, or spiritual, thousands for a time helpless and ignorant, in presence of difficulties through which they could not make their way, have found with surprise how true in the sequel our text has become to them.

For we all know how different things, persons, truths, ideas may become, as they are seen at different times and in different lights, as they are seen in relation to God and truth or outside that relation. The bread in Holy Communion is unchanged in *substance;* but some new and glorious relation is superadded to it. It is devoted by its consecration to the noblest *use* manward and Godward, so that St. Paul speaks of it with hushed reverence as "*The Body.*"[1] It seems to be a part of the same law that some one—once perhaps frivolous, common-place, sinful—is taken into the hand of the great High Priest, broken with sorrow and penitence, and blessed; and thereafter he is at once personally the same, and yet another higher and better by that awful consecration to another use. So again with some truth of creed or catechism which we have fallen into the fallacy of supposing that we know because it is familiar. It may be a truth that is sweet

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 29.

or one that is tremendous. It awaits its consecration, its blessing, its transformation into a something which in itself is the same yet which is other to us. That is to say, the familiar truth is old, in itself, in substance and expression. It needs no other, and can have no better formula. To change the formula would be to alter the truth; but to us it is taught newly with a fuller and nobler exposition by the unction which is "ever teaching," whereby we "know all things."

NOTES.

Ch. ii. 18-28.

Ver. 18. A *last hour*,] ἐσχάτη ὥρα. "Hour" is used in all St. John's writings of a definite point of time, which is also providentially fixed. (Cf. John xvii. 1; Apoc. iii. 3.) In something of this elevated signification Shakespeare appears to employ the word in *The Tempest* in relation to his own life:

> *Prospero.* "How's the day?"
> *Ariel.* "On the *sixth hour;* at which time, my lord,
> You said our work should cease."

Each decade of years is here looked upon as a providentially fixed duration of time. The poet intended to retire from the work of imaginative poetry when his life should draw on towards sixty years of age.

Ver. 19. "It doth not appear, nor is it probable, that these antichrists, when gone out from the Apostles, did still pretend to the orthodox faith; and therefore no need for the Apostle to make any provision against it. Nay, it is plainly intimated by the following discourse, that these antichrists being gone forth, did set themselves expressly, directly, against the orthodox, denying that Jesus, whom they did profess, to be the Christ; and therefore the design of this clause is most rationally conceived to be the prevention of that scandal which their horrid apostasy might give to weak Christians nor could anything more effectually prevent or remove it, than to let them know that these antichristian apostates were never

true stars in the firmament of the Church, but only blazing comets, as their falling away did evidently demonstrate."—*Dean Hardy*, 309.

Ver. 19. To use the words of a once famous controversial divine, they may be said to be "of the Church presumptively in their own, and others' opinion, but not really." (*Spalat., lib.* vii., 10, cf. on the whole subject, *St. Aug. Lib. de Bono. Persev.*, viii.)

"Let no one count that the good can go forth from the Church; the wind cannot carry away the wheat, nor the storm overthrow the solidly rooted tree. The light chaff is tossed by the wind, the weak trees go down before the blast. 'They went out from us, but they were not of us.'"—*S. Cyp., B. de Simplic.*

Ver. 24. *Ye shall abide in the Son, and in the Father.*] "If it be asked why the Son is put before the Father, the answer is well returned. Because the Apostle had just before inveighed against those who, though they pretended to acknowledge the Father, yet deny the Son. Though withal there may besides be a double reason assigned: the one to insinuate that the Son is not less than the Father, but that they are equal in essence and dignity. Upon this account most probable it is that the apostolical benediction beginneth with 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,' and then followeth 'the love of God the Father.' The other, because, as Beda well glosseth, No man cometh in, or continueth in, the Father but by the Son, who saith of Himself, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.'

"To draw it up, lo, here *Eximia laus doctrinæ*, an high commendation of evangelical doctrine, that it leads up to Christ, and by Him to the Father. The water riseth as high as the spring from whence it floweth. No wonder if the gospel, which cometh from God through Christ, lead us back again through Christ to God; and as by hearing and believing this doctrine we are united to, so by adhering to, and persevering in it, we continue in, the Son and the Father. Suitable to this is that promise of our blessed Saviour, John xiv. 23, 'If any man love Me he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him.'"—*Dean Hardy*, 350.

Ver. 27. The connection of the whole section is well traced by the old divine, whose commentary closes a little below.

"If you compare these three with the eight foregoing verses, you shall find them to be a summary repetition of what is there more largely delivered. There are three hinges upon which the precedent discourse turneth, namely, the peril of antichristian doctrine, the benefit of the Spirit's unction, the duty of perseverance in the Christian faith; and these three are inculcated in these verses. Indeed, where the danger is very great, the admonition cannot be too frequent. When the benefit is of singular advantage, it would be often considered, and a duty which must be performed cannot be too much pressed. No wonder if St. John proposed them in this gemination to our second thoughts. And yet it is not a naked repetition neither, but such as hath a variation and amplification in every particular. The duty is reinforced at the eight-and-twentieth verse, but in another phrase, of 'abiding in Christ,' and with a new motive, drawn from the second coming of Christ. The benefit is reiterated, and much amplified, in the seven-and-twentieth verse, as to its excellency and energy. Finally, the danger is repeated, but with another description of those by whom they were in danger; whilst as before he had called them antichrists for their enmity against Christ, so here, for their malignity against Christians, he calleth them seducers: 'These things have I written to you concerning them that seduce you,' etc."—*Dean Hardy*, 357.

SECTION V.

GREEK.

ἐὰν εἰδῆτε ὅτι δίκαιός ἐστιν, γινώσκετε ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγέννηται. Ἴδετε ποταπὴν ἀγάπην δέδωκεν ἡμῖν ὁ πατήρ, ἵνα τέκνα Θεοῦ κληθῶμεν, καὶ ἐσμέν. διὰ τοῦτο ὁ κόσμος οὐ γινώσκει ἡμᾶς, ὅτι οὐκ ἔγνω αὐτόν. Ἀγαπητοί, νῦν τέκνα Θεοῦ ἐσμέν, καὶ οὔπω ἐφανερώθη τί ἐσόμεθα· οἴδαμεν ὅτι ἐὰν φανερωθῇ ὅμοιοι αὐτῷ ἐσόμεθα, ὅτι ὀψόμεθα αὐτὸν καθώς ἐστιν. καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἔχων τὴν ἐλπίδα ταύτην ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἁγνίζει ἑαυτὸν καθὼς ἐκεῖνος ἁγνός ἐστιν. Πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν καὶ τὴν ἀνομίαν ποιεῖ· καὶ ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία. καὶ οἴδατε ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ἐφανερώθη ἵνα τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἄρῃ, καὶ ἁμαρτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν. πᾶς ὁ ἐν αὐτῷ μένων οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει·

LATIN.

Si scitis quoniam iustus est, scitote quoniam omnis qui facit iustitiam ex ipso natus est. Videte qualem caritatem dedit nobis Pater ut filii Dei nominemur et simus. Propter hoc mundus non novit nos, quia non novit eum. Carissimi, nunc filii Dei sumus et nondum apparuit quid erimus. Scimus quoniam cum apparuerit similes ei erimus, quoniam videbimus eum sicuti est. Et omnis qui habet spem hanc in eo sanctificat se, sicut et ille sanctus est. Omnis qui facit peccatum et iniquitatem facit, et peccatum est iniquitas. Et scitis quoniam ille apparuit ut peccata tolerit, et peccatum in eo non est. Omnis qui in eo manet

AUTHORISED VERSION.

If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him. Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the

REVISED VERSION.

If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one also that doeth righteousness is begotten of Him. Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and *such* we are. For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is. And every one that hath this hope *set* on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure. Every one that doeth sin doeth also

ANOTHER VERSION.

If ye know that He is righteous, ye are aware that every one who is doing righteousness is born of Him. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God;—and we are. Because of this the world knoweth us because it knew not Him. Beloved, now are we children of God, and it never yet was manifested what we shall be; but we know that if it shall be manifested we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone that hath this hope *fixed* on Him is ever purifying himself even as He is pure. Every one that is doing sin, is

πᾶς ὁ ἁμαρτάνων οὐχ ἑώρακεν αὐτὸν οὐδὲ ἔγνωκεν αὐτόν. Παιδία, μηδεὶς πλανάτω ὑμᾶς· ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην δίκαιός ἐστιν, καθὼς ἐκεῖνος δίκαιός ἐστιν. ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστίν, ὅτι ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ὁ διάβολος ἁμαρτάνει. εἰς τοῦτο ἐφανερώθη ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἵνα λύσῃ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ διαβόλου. πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ, ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει· καὶ οὐ δύναται ἁμαρτάνειν, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ γεγέννηται.

non peccat, et omnis qui peccat non videt eum nec cognovit eum. Filioli, nemo vos seducat. Qui facit iustitiam, iustus est, sicut et ille iustus est: qui facit peccatum, ex diabolo est quoniam ab initio diabolus peccat. In hoc apparuit Filius Dei, ut dissolvat opera diaboli. Omnis qui natus est ex Deo peccatum non facit, quoniam semen ipsius in eo manet, et non potest peccare, quoniam ex Deo natus est

law. And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin: for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

lawlessness: and sin is lawlessness. And ye know that He was manifested to take away sins; and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither knoweth Him. *My* little children, let no man lead you astray: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous; he that doeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. To this end was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because His seed abideth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God.

also doing lawlessness; and, *indeed*, sin is lawlessness. And ye know that He was manifested that He should take away sins; and sin in Him is not. Whosoever abideth in Him is not sinning; every one that is sinning hath not seen Him neither hath known Him. Little children, let no man mislead you; he that is doing righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous: he that is doing sin is of the devil, because the devil is continually sinning from the beginning. Unto this end the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God is not doing sin for His seed abideth in Him, and he is not able to be sinning, because he is born of God.

NOTES.

Ch. ii. 29, iii. 9.

III. ver. 2. "*Hope fixed in Him*" or "*on* Him."] The English reader should note the capital letter; not hope in our hearts, but hope unfastened from self. Ἐπὶ σοὶ Κύριε ἤλπισα, is the LXX. translation of Psalm xxx. 1.

Is ever purifying himself.] "See how he does not do away with freewill; for he says *purifies himself*. Who purifies us but God? Yet God does not purify you when you are unwilling; therefore in joining your will to God you purify yourself." (St. Augustine *in loc.*)

We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.] "So then we are about to see a certain sight, excelling all beauties of the earth; the beauty of gold, silver, forest, fields—the beauty of sea and air, sun and moon—the beauty of stars—the beauty of angels. Aye, excelling all these, because all these are beautiful only for *it*. What, therefore, shall we be when we shall see all these? What is promised? *We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is*. The tongue hath spoken as it could; let the rest be thought over by the heart" (St. Augustine *in loc.*). Cf. 2 Cor. iii. 18. "As the whole body, face, above all eyes of those who look towards the sun are *sunnied*" (insolantur).—*Bengel.*

Ver. 3. The ample stores of English divinity contain two sermons, one excellent, one beautiful, upon this verse. The first is by Paley; it is founded upon the leading thought, which he expresses with his usual manly common sense. "There are a class of Christians to whom the admonition of the text is peculiarly necessary. Finding it an easier thing to do good than to expel sins which cleave to their hearts, their affections, or their imaginations; they set their endeavours more towards *beneficence* than *purity*. Doing good

is not the whole of our duty, nor the most difficult part of it. In particular it is not that part of it which is insisted upon in our text." (Paley, Sermon XLIII.) But the second sermon is perhaps the finest which ever came from the pen of South, and he throws into it the full power of his heart and intellect. The bare analysis is this :—

Is it indeed possible for a man to "purify himself"? There is a twofold work of purification. (1) The infusing of the habit of purity into the soul (regeneration or conversion). In this respect, no man can purify himself. (2) The other work of purification is exercising that habit or grace of purity. "God who made, and since new made us, without ourselves, will not yet save us without ourselves." But again, how can a man purify himself to that degree *even as Christ is pure*? *Even as* denotes similitude of kind, not equality of degree. We are to purify ourselves from the *power* of sin, and from the *guilt* of sin. Purification from the *power* of sin consists in these things. (1) A continually renewed repentance. Every day, every hour, may afford matter for penitential sorrow. "A fountain of sin may well require a fountain of sorrow." Converting repentance must be followed by daily repentance. (2) Purifying ourselves consists in vigilant prevention of act of sin for the future. The means of effecting this are these. (*a*) Opposing the very first risings of the heart to sin. "The bees may be at work, and very busy within, though we see none of them fly abroad." (*b*) Severe mortifying duties, such as watchings and fastings. (*c*) Frequent and fervent prayer. "A praying heart naturally turns into a purified heart." We are to purify ourselves, also, from the *guilt* of sin. (1) Negatively. No duty or work within our power to perform can take away the guilt of sin. Those who think so, understand neither "the fiery strictness of the law, nor the spirituality of the Gospel." (2) That which alone can purify us from the *guilt* of sin is applying the virtue of the blood of Christ to the soul by renewed acts of faith. "It is that alone that is able to wash away the deep stain, and to change the hue of the spiritual Ethiopian." The last consideration is—how the life of heaven and future glory has such a sovereign influence upon this work? [This portion of the sermon falls far below the high standard of the rest, and entirely loses the spirit of St. John's thought.] South's *Sermons*. (Sermon 72, pp. 594-616.)

Ver. 6. *That He might destroy the works of the devil.*] The word here used for Satan (διάβολος) is given in John vii. 70, viii. 44, xiii. 2; Apoc. ii. 10, xii. 9, 12, xx. 2, 10. One class of miracles is not specifically recorded by St. John in his Gospel—the dispossession of demoniacs. Probably this terrible affliction was less common in Jerusalem than in Galilee. But the idea of possession is not foreign to his mode of thought. John vi. 70, viii. 44, 48, x. 20, xiii. 27. He here points to the dispossessions, so many of which are recorded by the Synoptics.

III. ver. 9. His *seed abideth in him.*] Of these words only two interpretations appear to be fairly possible. (1) The first would understand "His seed" as "*God's seed*," the stock or family of His children who are the true זֶרַע אֱלֹהִים, *seed of God* (Mal. ii. 15). In favour of this intrepretation it may be urged: first, that "seed" in the sense of "children, posterity, any one's entire stock and filiation," in perhaps nearly two hundred passages of the LXX., is the Greek rendering of many different Hebrew words. (See σπέρμα in Num. xxiv. 20; Deut. xxv. 1; Jer. l. 16; Gen. iii. 15; Isa. xiv. 22; Num. xxiii. 10; Isa. xv. 9; 2 Chron. xiv. 27; Isa. xiv. 30.) Secondly, no inapt meaning is given in the present text by so understanding the word. "He is unable to go on in sin, for *God's* true stock and family (they who are true to the majesty of their birth) abide in Him." (2) But a second meaning appears preferable. "Seed" (σπέρμα) would then be understood as a metaphorical application of the grain in the vegetable world which contains the possible germ of the future plant or tree; and would signify the possibility, or germinal principle, given by the Holy Spirit to the soul in regeneration. For this signification in our passage there is a strong argument, which we have not seen adverted to, in St. John's mode of language and of thought. "His seed abideth in him" (σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει) is really a quotation from the LXX. (οὗ τὸ σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ—note the repetition of the words Gen. i. 11, 12). Now the Book of Genesis seems to have been the part of the Old Testament which (with the Psalms) was chiefly in St. John's mind in the Epistle. (Cf. 1 John i. 1, Gen. i. 1.—iii. 8, Gen. ii.—iii. 12, Gen. iv. 8—iii. 15, Gen. xxvii. 41.) St. John, also, connects the new birth of the sons of God, as did our Lord, with the birth of the

creation, whose first germ was "the Spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters" (Gen. i. 2; John iii. 5). This parallel between the first creation and the second, between creation and regeneration, has always commended itself to profound Christian exegesis as being deeply set in the mind of Scripture. Witness the magnificent lines.

Plebs ut sacra renascatur,
Per Hunc unda consecratur,
Cui super ferebatur
In rerum exordium.
Fons, origo pietatis,
Fons emundans a peccatis,
Fons de fonte Deitatis,
Fons sacrator fontium!
Adam of St. Victor, Seq. xx., *Pentecoste.*

It is instructive, to study the treatment of our Lord's words (John iii. 5) by a commentator so little mystical as Professor Westcott. St. John, then, might point at this as another hint of regeneration in the parable of creation, viewed spiritually. The world of vegetation in Genesis is divided into two classes. (1) *Herbs* עֵשֶׂב = all grasses and plants which "*yield seed.*" (2) *Trees* עֵץ פְּרִי = shrubs and arboreous plants which have their seed enclosed in their fruit (Gen. i. 11, 12). Such are the plants of God's planting in His garden. Of each the "seed" from which he sprung, and which he will reproduce unless he becomes barren and blighted, "is in him." "He cannot sin." It is against the basis of his new nature. Of the new creation as of the old, the law is—"his seed is in him."

The rest of this verse is interpreted in the Discourse upon 1 John v. 4.

SECTION VI.

GREEK.

ἐν τούτῳ φανερά ἐστιν τὰ τέκνα τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τὰ τέκνα τοῦ διαβόλου. Πᾶς ὁ μὴ ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ· ὅτι αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγγελία ἣν ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους· οὐ καθὼς Κάϊν ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ἦν καὶ ἔσφαξε τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ· καὶ χάριν τίνος ἔσφαξεν αὐτόν; ὅτι τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ πονηρὰ ἦν, τὰ δὲ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ δίκαια. μὴ θαυμάζετε, ἀδελφοί, εἰ μισεῖ ὑμᾶς ὁ κόσμος. ἡμεῖς οἴδαμεν ὅτι μεταβεβήκαμεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωήν, ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τοὺς ἀδελφούς· ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν μένει ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ· πᾶς ὁ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἀνθρωποκτόνος ἐστίν· καὶ

LATIN.

In hoc manifesti sunt filii Dei et filii diaboli. Omnis qui non est iustus non est ex Deo, et qui non diligit fratrem suum; quoniam hæc est adnuntiatio quam audistis ab initio, ut diligamus alterutrum, non sicut Cain ex maligno erat, et occidit fratrem suum. Et propter quid occidit eum? quoniam opera eius maligna erant, fratris autem eius iusta. Nolite mirari fratres si odit nos mundus. Nos scimus quoniam translati sumus de morte in vitam, quoniam diligimus fratres: qui non diligit, manet in morte. Omnis qui odit fratrem suum homicida est, et scitis quoniam omnis homicida non habet

AUTHORISED VERSION.

In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death. Whosoever

REVISED VERSION.

In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message which ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another: not as Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, brethren, if the world hateth you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his

ANOTHER VERSION.

In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil: every one who is not doing righteousness is not of God, neither he that is not loving his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning that ye should love one another. Not as Cain was of the wicked one and slew his brother (*shall we be*). And wherefore slew he him? because his works were evil, but those of his brother righteous. Brethren, marvel not if the world hate you. We know that we have passed over from the death unto the life because we love the brethren. He who loveth not

οἴδατε ὅτι πᾶς ἀνθρωποκτόνος οὐκ ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον ἐν αὐτῷ μένουσαν. Ἐν τούτῳ ἐγνώκαμεν τὴν ἀγάπην, ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἔθηκε· καὶ ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν τὰς ψυχὰς θεῖναι. ὃς δ' ἂν ἔχῃ τὸν βίον τοῦ κόσμου καὶ θεωρῇ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ χρείαν ἔχοντα καὶ κλείσῃ τὰ σπλάγχνα αὐτοῦ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, πῶς ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ μένει ἐν αὐτῷ; τεκνία μὴ ἀγαπῶμεν λόγῳ μηδὲ γλώσσῃ, ἀλλ' ἔργῳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ. Καὶ ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐσμέν, καὶ ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ πείσομεν τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν· ὅτι ἐὰν καταγινώσκῃ ἡμῶν ἡ καρδία, ὅτι μείζων ἐστὶν ὁ Θεὸς τῆς καρδίας ἡμῶν, καὶ γινώσκει πάντα. ἀγαπητοί, ἐὰν, ἡ καρδία ἡμῶν μὴ καταγινώσκῃ

vitam æternam in se manentem. In hoc cognovimus caritatem Dei, quoniam ille pro nobis animam suam posuit: et nos debemus pro fratribus animas ponere. Qui habuerit substantiam mundi et viderit fratrem suum necesse habere et clauserit viscera sua ab eo, quomodo caritas Dei manet in eo? Filioli non diligamus verbo nec lingua sed opera et veritate. In hoc cognovimus quoniam ex veritate sumus: et in conspectu eius suademus corda nostra, quoniam si reprehenderit nos cor nostrum, major est Deus corda nostram et novit omnia. Carissimi si cor nostrum non reprehenderit nos, fiduciam habemus ad Deum, et quodcumque petierimus accipiemus

hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love *of God*, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath the world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels *of compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart

brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby know we love, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? *My* little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth. Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him, whereinsoever our heart condemn us; because God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us

abideth in the death. Every one who hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby know we The Love because He laid down His life for us: and we are bound to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath the living of the world and gazes on his brother having need and shuts out his heart from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? Children let us not love in word, nor with the tongue, but in work and truth. Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth and shall persuade our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemn us God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things.

ἡμῶν, παρρησίαν ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ ὃ ἐὰν αἰτῶμεν, λαμβάνομεν παρ' αὐτοῦ, ὅτι τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηροῦμεν, καὶ τὰ ἀρεστὰ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ ποιοῦμεν. καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐντολὴ αὐτοῦ, ἵνα πιστεύσωμεν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, καθὼς ἔδωκεν ἐντολήν. καὶ ὁ τηρῶν τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ, ἐν αὐτῷ μένει, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν αὐτῷ. καὶ ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι μένει ἐν ἡμῖν, ἐκ τοῦ Πνεύματος οὗ ἡμῖν ἔδωκεν.

ab eo, quoniam mandata eius custodemus et ea quæ sunt placida coram eo facimus. Et hoc est mandatum eius ut credamus in nomine filii eius Iesu Christi et diligamus alterutrum sicut dedit mandatum nobis. Et qui servat mandata eius, in ille manet et ipse in eo : et in hoc scimus quoniam manet in nobis, de spiritu quem dedit nobis.

condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment. And he that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us.

not, we have boldness toward God; and whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment, that we should believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, even as He gave us commandment. And he that keepeth His commandments abideth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He gave us.

Beloved, if our heart condemn us not then have we boldness toward God, and whatsoever we ask we receive of Him, for we observe His commandments, and are doing those things that are pleasing in His sight. And His commandment is this, that we should believe the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another as He gave commandment. And he who is observing His commandments abideth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us—from the Spirit which He gave us.

DISCOURSE IX.

LOFTY IDEALS PERILOUS UNLESS APPLIED

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth."—1 JOHN iii. 16-18.

EVEN the world sees that the Incarnation of Jesus Christ has very practical results. Even the Christmas which the world keeps is fruitful in two of these results—forgiving and giving. How many of the multitudinous letters at that season contain one or other of these things—either the kindly gift, or the tender of reconciliation; the confession "I was wrong," or the gentle advance "we were both wrong."

Love, charity (as we rather prefer to say), in its effects upon all our relations to others, is the beautiful subject of this section of our Epistle. It begins with the message of love[1] itself—yet another asterisk referring to the Gospel,[2] to the very substance of the teaching which the believers of Ephesus had first received from St. Paul,[3] and which had been emphasized by St. John.

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[1] Ver. 11.

[2] John xv. 12-17. See also the stress laid upon the unity of believers; surely including love as well as doctrine in the great High-Priestly prayer, John xvii. 21-23.

[3] "The message that ye heard *from the beginning*," conf. 1 John ii. 24.

This message is announced not merely as a sounding sentiment, but for the purpose of being carried out into action. As in moral subjects virtues and vices are best illustrated by their contraries[1]; so, beside the bright picture of the Son of God, the Apostle points to the sinister likeness of Cain.[2] After some brief and parenthetic words of pathetic consolation, he states as the mark of the great transition from death to life, the existence of love as a pervading spirit effectual in operation.[3] The dark opposite of this is then delineated[4] in consonance with the mode of representation just above.[5] But two such pictures of darkness must not shadow the sunlit gallery of love. There is another—the fairest and brightest. Our love can only be estimated by likeness to it; it is imperfect unless it is conformed to the print of the wounds, unless it can be measured by the standard of the great Self-sacrifice.[6] But if this may be claimed as the one real proof of conformity to Christ, much more is the limited partial

[1] "Contrariorum eadem est scientia."

[2] This is one of the few references to the Old Testament *history* in St. John's Epistle (Gen. iv. 1-8). To the *theology* of the Old Testament there are many references; *e.g.*, light and life. 1 John i. 1-5; John i. 4; Ps. xxxvi. 9. There is, however, another historical reference a few verses above (1 John iii. 8)—a passage of primary importance because it recognises the whole narrative of the Fall in Genesis, and affords a commentary upon the words of Christ (John viii. 44). The writer has somewhere seen an interesting suggestion that ver. 12 may contain some allusion to the visit of Apollonius of Tyana to Ephesus. Apollonius incited the mob to kill a beggar-man for the purpose of placing himself on a level with Chaleas and others who caused the sacrifice of human victims. The date of this incident would apparently coincide with the closing years of St. John's life (*Philostrat. vita Apollon.*, Act. ii., S. 5).

[3] Ver. 14.

[4] Vers. 14, 15.

[5] Ver. 12.

[6] Ver. 16.

sacrifice of "this world's good" required.[1] This spirit, and the conduct which it requires in the long run, will be found to be the test of all solid spiritual comfort,[2] of all true self-condemnation or self-acquittal.[3]

We may say of the verses prefixed to this discourse, that they bring before us charity in its *idea*, in its *example*, in its *characteristics*—in *theory*, in *action*, in *life*.

I.

We have here love in its idea, "hereby know we love." Rather "hereby know we *The Love*."[4]

Here the idea of charity in us runs parallel with that in Christ. It is a subtle but true remark,[5] that there is here no logical inferential particle. "Because He laid down His life for us," is not followed by its natural correlative "therefore we," but by a simple connective "and we." The reason is this, that our duty herein is not a mere cold logical deduction. It is all of one piece with The Love. "We know The Love because He laid down His life for us; *and* we are in duty bound for the brethren to lay down our lives."

Here, then, is the idea of love, as capable of realisation in us. It is continuous unselfishness, to be crowned by voluntary death, if death is necessary. The beautiful old Church tradition shows that this language was the language of St. John's life. Who has forgotten how the Apostle in his old age is said to have gone

[1] Ver. 17.
[2] Vers. 18, 19.
[3] Vers. 20, 21.
[4] "For *The Love* I rather beseech thee" (Phil. v. 9). The addition in the A.V. (*of God*) rather impairs the sweetness and power, the reverential reserve of the original.
[5] Of Prof. Westcott.

on a journey to find the young man who had fled from Ephesus and joined a band of robbers; and to have appealed to the fugitive in words which are the pathetic echo of these—"if needs be I would die for thee as He for us?"

II.

The idea of charity is then practically illustrated by an incident of its opposite. "But whoso hath this world's good, and gazes upon his brother in need, and shuts up his heart against him, how doth the love of God abide in him?"[1] The reason for this descent in thought is wise and sound. High abstract ideas expressed in lofty and transcendent language, are at once necessary and dangerous for creatures like us. They are necessary, because without these grand conceptions our moral language and our moral life would be wanting in dignity, in amplitude, in the inspiration and impulse which are often necessary for duty and always for restoration. But they are dangerous in proportion to their grandeur. Men are apt to mistake the emotion awakened by the very sound of these magnificent expressions of duty for the discharge of the duty itself. Hypocrisy delights in sublime speculations, because it has no intention of their costing anything. Some of the most abject creatures embodied by the masters of romance never fail to parade their sonorous generalizations. One of such characters, as the world will long remember, proclaims that sympathy is one of the holiest principles of our common nature, while he shakes his fist at a beggar.[2]

[1] Ver. 17.

[2] It is suggestive that on Quinquagesima Sunday, when 1 Cor. xiii. is the Epistle, St. Luke xviii. 31 sqq., is the Gospel. The lyric of love is joined with a fragment of its epic. That fragment tells us of a

Every large speculative ideal then is liable to this danger; and he who contemplates it requires to be brought down from his transcendental region to the test of some commonplace duty. This is the latent link of connection in this passage. The ideal of love to which St. John points is the loftiest of all the moral and spiritual emotions which belong to the sentiments of man. Its archetype is in the bosom of God, in the eternal relations of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. "God is love." Its home in humanity is Christ's heart of fire and flesh; its example is the Incarnation ending in the Cross.

Now of course the question for all but one in thousands is not the attainment of this lofty ideal—laying down his life for the brethren. Now and then, indeed, the physician pays with his own death for the heroic rashness of drawing out from his patient the fatal matter. Sometimes the pastor is cut off by fever contracted in ministering to the sick, or by voluntarily living and working in an unwholesome atmosphere. Once or twice in a decade some heart is as finely touched by the spirit of love as Father Damien, facing the certainty of death from a long slow putrefaction, that a congregation of lepers may enjoy the consolations of faith. St. John here reminds us that the ordinary test of charity is much more commonplace. It is helpful compassion to a brother who is known to be in need, manifested by giving to him something of this world's "good"—of the "living"[1] of this world which he possesses.

love which not only proclaimed itself ready to be sacrificed (Luke xviii. 31-33), but condescended individually to the blind importunate mendicant who sat by the wayside begging (vers. 35-43).

[1] The word here is βίος not ζωή. "Βίος period of life; hence the means by which it is sustained, means of life." (Archbp. Trench.)

III.

We have next the characteristics of love in action. "My sons, let us not love in word nor with the tongue; but in work and truth." There is love in its energy and reality; in its effort and sincerity—active and honest, without indolence and without pretence. We may well be reminded here of another familiar story of St. John at Ephesus. When too old to walk himself to the assembly of the Church, he was carried there. The Apostle who had lain upon the breast of Jesus; who had derived from direct communication with Him those words and thoughts which are the life of the elect; was expected to address the faithful. The light of the Ephesian summer fell upon his white hair; perhaps glittered upon the mitre which tradition has assigned to him. But when he had risen to speak, he only repeated—"little children, love one another." Modern hearers are sometimes tempted to envy the primitive Christians of the Ephesian Church, if for nothing else, yet for the privilege of listening to the shortest sermon upon record in the annals of Christianity. When Christian preachers have behind them the same long series of virgin years, within them the same love of Christ and knowledge of His mysteries; when their very presence evinces the same sad, tender, smiling, weeping, all-embracing sympathy with the wants and sorrows of humanity; they may perhaps venture upon the perilous experiment of contracting their sermons within the same span as St. John's. And when some, who like the hearers at Ephesus, are not prepared for

It is to be wished that the R. V. had either kept "the good" of the A. V., or adopted the word "living"—the translation of *βίος* in Mark xii. 44; Luke xxi. 4.

the repetition of an utterance so brief, begin to ask—"why are you always saying this?"—the answer may well be in the spirit of the reply which the aged Apostle is said to have made—"because it is the commandment of the Lord, and sufficient, if it only be fulfilled indeed."

IV.

This passage supplies an argument (capable, as we have seen in the Introduction, of much larger expansion from the Epistle as a whole) against mutilated views, fragmentary versions of the Christian life.

There are four such views which are widely prevalent at the present time.

(1) The first of these is *emotionalism;* which makes the entire Christian life consist in a series or bundle of emotions. Its origin is the desire of having the feelings touched, partly from sheer love of excitement; partly from an idea that *if* and *when* we have worked up certain emotions to a fixed point we are saved and safe. This reliance upon feelings is in the last analysis reliance upon self. It is a form of salvation by works; for feelings are inward actions. It is an unhappy anachronism which inverts the order of Scripture; which substitutes peace and grace (the compendious dogma of the heresy of the emotions) for grace and peace, the only order known to St. Paul and St. John.[1] The only spiritual emotions spoken of in this Epistle are joy, confidence, assuring our hearts before Him":[2] the first as the result of receiving the history of Jesus in the Gospel, the Incarnation, and the blessed communion with God and the Church which it involves; the second as tried by tests of a most practical kind.

[1] 2 John 3.

[2] 1 John i. 4, ii. 28, iii. 21, iv. 17, v. 14, iii. 19.

(2) The next of these mutilated views of the Christian life is *doctrinalism*—which makes it consist of a series or bundle of doctrines apprehended and expressed correctly, at least according to certain formulas, generally of a narrow and unauthorised character. According to this view the question to be answered is—has one quite correctly understood, can one verbally formulate certain almost scholastic distinctions in the doctrine of justification? The well-known standard—"the Bible only"—must be reduced by the excision of all within the Bible except the writings of St. Paul; and even in this selected portion faith must be entirely guided by certain portions more selected still, so that the question finally may be reduced to this shape—"am I a great deal sounder than St. John and St. James, a little sounder than an unexpurgated St. Paul, as sound as a carefully expurgated edition of the Pauline Epistles?

(3) The third mutilated view of the Christian life is *humanitarianism*—which makes it a series or bundle of philanthropic actions.

There are some who work for hospitals, or try to bring more light and sweetness into crowded dwelling-houses. Their lives are pure and noble. But the one article of their creed is humanity. Altruism is their highest duty. Their object, so far as they have any object apart from the supreme rule of doing right, is to lay hold on subjective immortality by living on in the recollection of those whom they have helped, whose existence has been soothed and sweetened by their sympathy. With others the case is different. Certain forms of this busy helpfulness—especially in the laudable provision of recreations for the poor—are an innocent interlude in fashionable life; sometimes, alas! a kind of work of supererogation, to atone for the want

of devotion or of purity—possibly an untheological survival of a belief in justification by works.

4. A *third* fragmentary view of the Christian life is *observationism*, which makes it to consist in a bundle or series of observances. Frequent services and communions, perhaps with exquisite forms and in beautifully decorated churches, have their dangers as well as their blessings. However closely linked these observances may be, there must still in every life be interstices between them. How are these filled up? What spirit within connects together, vivifies and unifies, this series of external acts of devotion? They are means to an end. What if the means come to interpose between us and the end—just as a great political thinker has observed that with legal minds the forms of business frequently overshadow the substance of business, which is their end, and for which they were called into existence. And what is the end of our Christian calling? A life pardoned; in process of purification; growing in faith, in love of God and man, in quiet joyful service. Certainly a "rage for ceremonials and statistics," a long list of observances, does not infallibly secure such a life, though it may often be not alone the delighted and continuous expression, but the constant food and support of such a life. But assuredly if men trust in any of these things—in their emotions, in their favourite formulas, in their philanthropic works, in their religious observances—in anything but Christ, they greatly need to go back to the simple text, "His name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."

Now, as we have said above, in distinction from all these fragmentary views, St. John's Epistle is a survey of the completed Christian life, founded upon his Gospel. It is a consummate fruit ripened in the long summers

of his experience. It is not a treatise upon the Christian affections, nor a system of doctrine, nor an essay upon works of charity, nor a companion to services.

Yet this wonderful Epistle presupposes at least much that is most precious of all these elements. (1) It is far from being a burst of emotionalism. Yet almost at the outset it speaks of an emotion as being the natural result of rightly received objective truth.[1] St. John recognises feeling, whether of supernatural or natural origin;[2] but he recognises it with a certain majestic reserve. Once only does he seem to be carried away. In a passage to which reference has just been made, after stating the dogma of the Incarnation, he suffuses it with a wealth of emotional colour. It is Christmas in his soul; the bells ring out good tidings of great joy. "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." (2) This Epistle is no dogmatic summary. Yet combining its proœmium with the other of the fourth Gospel, we have the most perfect statement of the dogma of the Incarnation. As we read thoughtfully on, dogma after dogma stands out in relief. The divinity of the Word, the reality of His manhood, the effect of His atonement, His intercession, His continual presence, the personality of the Holy Spirit, His gifts to us, the relation of the Spirit to Christ, the Holy Trinity—all these find their place in these few

[1] 1 John i. 4.

[2] τὰ σπλάγχνα (ver. 17). This however is the only occurrence of the word in St. John's writings. The substantive σπλάγχνα = *emotions*, is found in classical poets. But the verb σπλαγχνίζομαι occurs only in LXX. and New Testament—and thus, like ἀγάπη, is almost born within the circle of revealed truth. The new dispensation so rich in the mercy of God (Luke i. 78), so fruitful in mercy from man to man, may well claim a new vocabulary in the department of tenderness and pity.

pages. If St. John is no mere doctrinalist he is yet the greatest theologian the Church has ever seen. (3) Once more; if the Apostle's Christianity is no mere humanitarian sentiment to encourage the cultivation of miscellaneous acts of good-nature, yet it is deeply pervaded by a sense of the integral connection of practical love of man with the love of God. So much is this the case, that a large gathering of the most emotional of modern sects is said to have gone on with a Bible reading in St. John's Epistle until they came to the words—"we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." The reader immediately closed the book, pronouncing with general assent the verse was likely to disturb the peace of the children of God. Still St. John puts humanitarianism in its right place as a result of something higher. "This commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." As if he would say—"do not sever the law of social life from the law of supernatural life; do not separate the human fraternity from a Divine Fatherhood." (4) No one can suppose that for St. John religion was a mere string of observances. Indeed, to some his Epistle has given the notion of a man living in an atmosphere where external ordinances and ministries either did not exist at all, or only in almost impalpable forms. Yet in that wonderful manual, "The Imitation of Christ," there is scarcely the faintest trace of any of these external things; while no one could possibly argue that the author was ignorant of, or lightly esteemed, the ordinances and sacraments amongst which his life must have been spent. Certainly the fourth Gospel is deeply sacramental. This Epistle, with its calm, unhesitating conviction of the sonship of all to whom it is ad-

dressed; with its view of the Christian life as in idea a continuous growth from a birth the secret of whose origin is given in the Gospel; with its expressive hints of sources of grace and power and of a continual presence of Christ; with its deep mystical realisation of the double flow from the pierced side upon the cross, and its thrice-repeated exchange of the *sacramental* order "*water* and blood,"[1] for the *historical* order "*blood* and water"; unquestionably has the sacramental sense diffused throughout it. The Sacraments are not in obtrusive prominence; yet for those who have eyes to see they lie in deep and tender distances. Such is the view of the Christian life in this letter—a life in which Christ's truth is blended with Christ's love; assimilated by thought, exhaling in worship, softening into sympathy with man's suffering and sorrow. It calls for the believing soul, the devout heart, the helping hand. It is the perfect balance in a saintly soul, of feeling, creed, communion, and work.

For of work for our fellow man it is that the question is asked half despairingly—"whoso hath this world's good, and seeth" (gazes at)[2] "his brother have need, and shutteth up his heart against him, how doth the love of God[3] dwell in him." Some can quietly look at the poor brother; they *see him* in need, but they have not the thoughtful eyes that see his need. They may belong to "the sluggard Pity's vision-weaving tribe," who expend a sigh of sentiment upon such spectacles, and nothing more. Or they may be hardened professors of the "dismal science," who have learned to

[1] 1 John v. 6, conf. John xix. 34.

[2] *θεωρῇ*, ver. 17.

[3] "The love of which God is at once the object, and the author, and the pattern." (Prof. Westcott.)

consider a sigh as the luxury of ignorance or of feebleness. But for all practical purposes both these classes interpose a too effectual barrier between their heart and their brother's need. But true Christians are made partakers in Christ of the mystery of human suffering. Even when they are not actually in sight of brethren in want, their ears are ever hearing the ceaseless moaning of the sea of human sorrow, with a sympathy which involves its own measure of pain, though a pain which brings with it abundant compensation. Their inner life has not merely won for itself the partly selfish satisfaction of personal escape from punishment, great as that blessing may be. They have caught something of the meaning of the secret of all love—"we love because He first loved us."[1] In those words is the romance (if we may dare to call it so) of the divine love-tale. Under its influence the face once hard and narrow often becomes radiant and softened; it smiles, or is tearful, in the light of the love of His face who first loved.

It is this principle of St. John which is ever at work in Christian lands. In hospitals it tells us that Christ is ever passing down the wards; that He will have no stinted service; that He must have more for His sick more devotion, a gentler touch, a finer sympathy; that where His hand has broken and blessed, every particle is a sacred thing, and must be treated reverently.

Are there any who are tempted to think that our text has become antiquated; that it no longer holds true in the light of organised charity, of economic science? Let them listen to one who speaks with the weight of years of active benevolence, and with consummate knowledge of its method and duties. "There are men

[1] 1 John iv. 19. [2] Lord Meath.

who, in their detestation of roguery, forget that by a wholesale condemnation of charity, they run the risk of driving the honest to despair and of turning them into the very rogues of whom they desire so ardently to be quit. These men are unconsciously playing into the hands of the Socialists and the Anarchists, the only sections of society whose distinct interest it is that misery and starvation should increase. No doubt indiscriminate almsgiving is hurtful to the State as well as to the individual who receives the dole, but not less dangerous would it be to society if the principles of these stern political economists were to be literally accepted by any large number of the rich, and if charity ceased to be practised within the land. We cannot yet afford to shut ourselves up in the castle of philosophic indifference, regardless of the fate of those who have the misfortune to find themselves outside its walls."

NOTES.

Ch. iii. 12—21.

Ver. 12. A second reference to the Book of Genesis within a few lines (see ver. 8). It is characteristic of the historical spirit of St. John that he does not entangle himself with the luxuriant upgrowth of wild fable in which traditional Judaism has ever enveloped the simple narrative of Cain and Abel in Genesis.

Ver 15. St. John may refer to another passage in Genesis. "And Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob" (Gen. xxvii. 11-41).

Ver. 17. A Rabbinical saying is worth recording as an illustration of the spirit in which the "living of this world" should be held. "He that saith, Mine is thine, and thine is mine, is an idiot; he that saith, Mine is mine, and thine is thine, is moderate; he that saith, Mine is thine, and thine is thine, is

charitable; but he that saith, Thine is mine, and mine is mine, is wicked; even though it be only saying it in his heart, to wish it were so." Paulus Fagius. *Sentent. Heb.*

Vers. 19, 20, 21. These verses probably present more difficulties than any other portion of this Epistle. (1) For their construction. The following note from a *fasciculus* (now no longer to be procured) written by a master of sacred studies seems to us to say all that can be said for a rendering different from that of the R. V. and our own.

"Ver. 20: ὅτι ἐὰν καταγινώσκῃ ἡμῶν ἡ καρδία, ὅτι μείζων ἐστὶν ὁ Θεός. The difficulty is in the second ὅτι, which is ignored by the Vulgate and A. V. The Revisers (after Hoogeveen, *De Partic.* p. 589, ed. Schütz. and others) point ὅ,τι ἐὰν in the first clause, which they join with the preceding verse: 'and shall assure our heart before him, whereinsoever our heart condemn us; because God' etc. But this is quite inadmissible, since nothing can be plainer than that ἐὰν καταγινώσκῃ (ver. 20) and ἐὰν μὴ καταγινώσκῃ (ver. 21) are both *in protasi*, and in strict correlation with each other. Dean Alford suggests an ellipsis of the verb substantive before the second ὅτι, and would translate: 'Because if our heart condemn us, (it is) because God' etc. He instances such cases as εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ, (he is) καινὴ κτίσις, which are quite dissimilar; but the following from St. Chrysostom (T. X. p. 122 B) fully bears out this construction; Ὁ ζυγός μου χρηστὸς κ.τ.ἑ. εἰ δὲ οὐκ αἰσθάνῃ τῆς κουφότητος, ὅΟΤΙ προθυμίαν ἐρρωμένην οὐκ ἔχεις; where I have expunged δῆλον before ὅτι on the authority of three out of four MSS. collated for these Homilies, the fourth, with the old Latin version, for ὅτι προθυμίαν reading μὴ θαυμάσῃς, προθυμίαν γάρ. In my note on that place I have pointed out that the ellipsis is not of δῆλον, but of τὸ αἴτιον, *causa est*, *quia*. So in the present instance we might translate: 'For if our heart condemn us, (the reason is) because God is greater,' etc., were it not for the difficulty of explaining how the fact of God's being greater than our heart can be a valid reason for our heart condemning us. I would, therefore, take the second ὅτι for *quod*, not *quia*, and suppose an ellipsis of δῆλον, as in 1 Tim. vi. 7, where see note."—*Otium Norvicense*, by Frederic Field, M.A., LL.D. (pp. 153, 15).

Dr. Field's rendering then is: "For if our heart condemn us, (it is evident) that God is greater than our heart."

(2) For the meaning of these verses. All interpretations appear to fall into two classes; as St. John is supposed to aim at (*a*) *soothing* conscience, or (*b*) *awakening* it. But may he not really intend to leave people to think over a something which he has purposely omitted, and to apply it as required? The saying "God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things," probably cuts two ways. If my heart condemn me justly, and with truth, much more so does God who is greater than my heart. But, if my conscience is tenderly sensitive, scrupulous because full of love, God's knowledge of my heart tells in this case on the brighter side, as truly as in the other case it told on the darker side. We may lull our heart. "A tranquil God tranquillises all things, and to see His peacefulness is to be at peace." (*St. Bernard in Cant.*)

SECTION VII.

GREEK.

Ἀγαπητοί, μὴ παντὶ πνεύματι πιστεύετε, ἀλλὰ δοκιμάζετε τὰ πνεύματα, εἰ ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστιν· ὅτι πολλοὶ ψευδοπροφῆται ἐξεληλύθασιν εἰς τὸν κόσμον. ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκετε τὸ Πνεῦμα τοῦ Θεοῦ· πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ ὁμολογεῖ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα, ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστι. καὶ πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα, ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστι· καὶ τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου, ὃ ἀκηκόατε ὅτι ἔρχεται, καὶ νῦν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἐστὶν ἤδη. Ὑμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστε, τεκνία. καὶ νενικήκατε αὐτούς· ὅτι μείζων ἐστὶν ὁ ἐν ὑμῖν ἢ ὁ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ. Αὐτοὶ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου εἰσί· διὰ τοῦτο ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου λαλοῦσι,

LATIN.

Carissimi, nolite omni spiritui credere, sed probate spiritus si ex Deo sint, quoniam multi pseudoprophetæ exierunt in mundum. In hoc cognoscitur spiritus Dei. Omnis spiritus qui confitetur Iesum Christum in carne venisse, ex Deo est: et omnis spiritus qui solvit Iesum Christum ex Deo non est; et hic est Antichristus quod audistis quoniam venit et nunc iam in mundo est. Vos ex Deo estis, filioli, et vicistis eum, quoniam maior est qui in vobis est quam qui in mundo. Ipsi de mundo sunt: ideo de mundo loquuntur, et mundus eos audit. Nos ex Deo sumus: qui novit Deum audit nos; qui non est ex Deo,

AUTHORISED VERSION.

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: there-

REVISED VERSION.

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit which confesseth not Jesus is not of God: and this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it cometh; and now it is in the world already. Ye are of God, *my* little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world, therefore speak they *as* of

ANOTHER VERSION.

Beloved, believe not any spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth Jesus Christ come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit which confesseth not Jesus is not of God: and this is that *power* of the antichrist whereof ye have heard that it cometh, and even now it is in the world already. Ye are of God, children, and have conquered them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world, therefore of the world is their manner of speech,

καὶ ὁ κόσμος αὐτῶν ἀκούει. ἡμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐσμεν· ὁ γινώσκων τὸν Θεόν, ἀκούει ἡμῶν· ὃς οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ, οὐκ ἀκούει ἡμῶν. Ἐκ τούτου γινώσκομεν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς πλάνης.

non audit nos. In hoc cognoscimus spiritum veritatis et spiritum erroris.

fore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us: he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us: he who is not of God heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

and the world heareth them. We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us, he who is not of God heareth not us. From this we know the spirit of The Truth, and the spirit of the error

NOTES.

Ch. iv. 1, 7.

Ver. 1. *Believe not any spirit*] μὴ παντὶ πνεύματι πιστεύετε. The different constructions of πιστεύειν in St. John must be carefully noted. (*a*) With *dative* as here—"believe not such an one;" take him not upon trust, at his own word; credit him not with veracity. So in the Gospel, our Lord continually complains that the Jews did not even believe Him on His word—strong and clear as that word was with all the freshness of Heaven, and all the transparency of truth. John v. 38, 46, viii. 45, 46, x. 37.

(*b*) πιστεύειν εἰς=to make an act of faith in, to repose in as divine. John iii. 36, iv. 39, vi. 35, xi. 25; 1 John v. 10.

(*c*) With an *accusative*=to be persuaded of the thing—to believe it with an implied conviction of permanence in the persuasion—as in the beautiful verse (iv. 16)—"we are fully persuaded of the love of God," we make it the creed of our heart. πεπιστεύκαμεν τὴν ἀγάπην.

SECTION VIII.

GREEK.	LATIN.	AUTHORISED VERSION.	REVISED VERSION.	ANOTHER VERSION.
Ἀγαπητοί, ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, ὅτι ἡ ἀγάπη ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστι, καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ γεγέννηται καὶ γινώσκει τὸν Θεόν· ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν οὐκ ἔγνω τὸν Θεόν· ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν. Ἐν τούτῳ ἐφανερώθη ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν, ὅτι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ ἀπέσταλκεν ὁ Θεὸς εἰς τὸν κόσμον, ἵνα ζήσωμεν δι' αὐτοῦ. ἐν τούτῳ ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη, οὐχ ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἠγαπήσαμεν τὸν Θεὸν, ἀλλ' ὅτι αὐτὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ ἀπέστειλε τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἱλασμὸν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν. ἀγαπητοί, εἰ οὕτως ὁ Θεὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, καὶ ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν. Θεὸν οὐδεὶς πώποτε τεθέαται· ἐὰν ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, ὁ Θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν μένει,	Carissimi, diligamus invicem, quoniam caritas ex Deo est, et omnis qui diligit ex Deo natus est et cognoscit Deum. Qui non diligit non novit Deum, quoniam Deus caritas est. In hoc apparuit caritas Dei in nobis, quoniam Filium Suum unigenitum misit Deus in mundum, ut vivamus per Eum. In hoc est caritas, non quasi nos dilexerimus Deum, sed quoniam ipse dilexit nos et misit Filium suum propitionem pro peccatis nostris. Carissimi, si sic Deus dilexit nos, et nos debemus alterutrum diligere. Deum nemo vidit unquam: si diligamus invicem, Deus in nobis manet, et caritas eius in nobis pertecta est. In hos	Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. Hereby	Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man hath beheld God at any time: if we love one another, God abideth in us, and His love is perfected in us: here-	Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God in us, because that God hath sent His Son His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. In this is The Love, not that we loved God, but but that He loved us, and sent His Son *as* propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also are bounden to love one another. God no one hath ever yet beholden: if we love one another God abideth in us and His love is perfected in us. Here-

καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη αὐτοῦ τετελειωμένη ἐστὶν ἐν ἡμῖν. ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ μένομεν καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν ἡμῖν, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ Πνεύματος αὐτοῦ δεδώκεν ἡμῖν. Καὶ ἡμεῖς τεθεάμεθα καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν ὅτι ὁ πατὴρ ἀπέσταλκε τὸν υἱὸν σωτῆρα τοῦ κόσμου. ὃς ἂν ὁμολογήσῃ ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὁ Θεὸς ἐν αὐτῷ μένει καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν τῷ Θεῷ. Καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐγνώκαμεν καὶ πεπιστεύκαμεν τὴν ἀγάπην ἣν ἔχει ὁ Θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν. ὁ Θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστί, καὶ ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐν τῷ Θεῷ μένει, καὶ ὁ Θεὸς ἐν αὐτῷ. Ἐν τούτῳ τετελείωται ἡ ἀγάπη μεθ' ἡμῶν, ἵνα παρρησίαν ἔχωμεν ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς κρίσεως· ὅτι καθὼς ἐκεῖνός ἐστι καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ τούτῳ. φόβος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ, ἀλλ' ἡ τελεία ἀγάπη ἔξω βάλλει τὸν φόβον, ὅτι ὁ φόβος

intellegimus quoniam in eum manemus et ipse in nobis, quoniam de Spiritu Suo dedit nobis. Et nos vidimus et testificamur quoniam Pater misit Filium salvatorem mundi. Quicunque confessus fuerit quoniam Iesus est Filius Dei, Deus in eo manet, et ipse in Deo. Et nos cognovimus et credimus, caritati Dei quam habet Deus in nobis. Deus caritas est, et qui manet in caritate in Deo manet, et Deus in eo. In hoc perfecta est nobiscum caritas ut fiduciam habeamus in die iudicii quia sicut ille est et nos sumus in hoc mundo. Timor non est in caritate, sed perfecta caritas foras mittit timorem; quoniam timor pœnam habet, qui autem timet non est perfectus in caritate. Nos ergo diligamus invicem quo-

know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love: and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love Him, because He

by know we that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit. And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God. And we know and have believed the love which God hath in us. God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him. Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, even so are we in this world. There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love.

in know we that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us out of the *fulness* of His Spirit. And we have beheld and are bearing witness that the Father hath sent the Son *as* the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him and he in God. And we know and have believed the love which God hath in us. God is love; and he that abideth in God, abideth in God, and God in him. Herein hath The Love been perfected with us that we may have boldness in the Day of the Judgment: because as He is so are we in this world. Fear is not in love: but the perfect love casteth out fear, because fear bringeth punishment with it. He that is fearing is

κδλασιν ἔχει, ὁ δὲ φοβούμενος οὐ τετελείωται ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ. ἡμεῖς ἀγαπῶμεν αὐτόν, ὅτι αὐτὸς πρῶτος ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς. Ἐάν τις εἴπῃ, Ὅτι ἀγαπῶ τὸν Θεόν, καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ μισῇ, ψεύστης ἐστίν· ὁ γὰρ μὴ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ὃν ἑώρακε τὸν Θεὸν ὃν οὐχ ἑώρακε πῶς δύναται ἀγαπᾶν; καὶ ταύτην τὴν ἐντολὴν ἔχομεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, ἵνα ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν Θεὸν ἀγαπᾷ καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ.

Πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστιν ὁ Χριστὸς ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ γεγέννηται· καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν γεννήσαντα ἀγαπᾷ καὶ τὸν γεγεννημένον ἐξ αὐτοῦ. ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τὰ τέκνα τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὅταν τὸν Θεὸν ἀγαπῶμεν καὶ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν. αὕτη γάρ ἐστιν ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἵνα τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν.

niam Deus prior dilexit nos. Si quis diserit quoniam diligo Deum, et fratrem suum oderit, mendax est: qui enim non diligit fratrem suum quem videt, Deum quem non videt quomodo potest diligere? Et hoc mandatum habemus a Deo, ut qui diligat Deum diligat et fratrem suum.

Omnis qui credit quoniam Iesus est Christus, ex Deo natus est; et omnis qui diligit eum qui genuit, diligit eum qui natus est ex eo. In hoc cognoscimus quoniam diligimus natos Dei, cum Deum diligamus et mandata eius faciamus. Hæc est enim caritas Dei, ut mandata eius custodiamus.

first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth Him that begat loveth Him also that is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.

We love, because He first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God: and whosoever loveth Him that begat loveth Him also that is begotten of Him. Hereby we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and do His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.

not made perfect in his love. We love Him because He first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, God whom he hath not seen how can he love? And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and every one who loveth Him that begat loveth also Him that is begotten of Him. Herein we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and do His commandments: for this is the love of God, that we observe His commandments.

DISCOURSE X.

BOLDNESS IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world."—1 JOHN iv. 17.

IT has been so often repeated that St. John's eschatology is idealized and spiritual, that people now seldom pause to ask what is meant by the words. Those who repeat them most frequently seem to think that the idealized means that which will never come into the region of historical fact, and that the spiritual is best defined as the unreal. Yet, without postulating the Johannic authorship of the Apocalypse—where the Judgment is described with the most awful accompaniments of outward solemnity[1]—there are two places in this Epistle which are allowed to drop out of view, but which bring us face to face with the visible manifestations of an external Advent. It is a peculiarity of St. John's style (as we have frequently seen) to strike some chord of thought, so to speak, before its time: to allow the prelusive note to float away, until suddenly, after a time, it surprises us by coming back again with a fuller and bolder resonance. "And now, my sons,"[2] (had the Apostle said) "abide in Him, that if He shall be manifested, we may have confidence, and not be

[1] Apoc. xx. 12, 13. [2] 1 John ii. 28.

ashamed shrinking from Him[1] at His coming."[2] In our text the same thought is resumed, and the reality of the Coming and Judgment in its external manifestation as emphatically given as in any other part of the New Testament.[3]

We may here speak of the conception of the Day of the Judgment: of the fear with which that conception is encompassed; and of the sole means of the removal of that fear which St. John recognises.

I.

We examine the general conception of "the Day of the Judgment," as given in the New Testament.

As there is that which with terrible emphasis is marked off as "*the* Judgment,"[4] "*the* Parousia," so there are other judgments or advents of a preparatory character. As there are phenomena known as mock suns, or haloes round the moon, so there are fainter reflections ringed round the Advent, the Judgment.[5]

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[1] *αἰσχυνθῶμεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ*, see Jerem. xii. 13 (for בּוֹשׁ מִן). Prof. Westcott happily quotes, "as a guilty thing surprised."

[2] *Coming*, *ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ*. The word is not found elsewhere in the Johannic group of writings. But by his use of it here, St. John falls into line with the whole array of apostolic witnesses—with St. Matthew (xxiv. 3-27, 37, 39); with St. Paul (*passim*); with St. James (v. 7, 8); with St. Peter (2 Peter i. 16, iii. 4-12). This fact may well warn critics of the precarious character of theories founded upon "the negative phenomena of the books of the New Testament." (See Professor Westcott's excellent note, *The Epistles of St. John*, 80.)

[3] (*ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς κρίσεως*)—"in the Day of the Judgment"—cf. Apoc. xiv. 7. We have "in THE Judgment" (Matt. xii. 41, 42 Luke x. 14, xi. 31, 32)—the indefinite "day of judgment" (Matt. x. 15, xi. 22, 24; Mark vi. 11).

[4] 2 Pet. ii. 9, iii. 7—but "*The* Day of *The* Judgment," here only.

[5] Cf. our Lord's words—"*henceforth* (*ἀπ' ἄρτι*) ye shall see the Son of Man *coming*." Matt. xxvi. 64.)

Thus, in the development of history, there are successive cycles of continuing judgment; preparatory advents; less completed *crises*, as even the world calls them.

But against one somewhat widely-spread way of blotting the Day of the Judgment from the calendar of the future—so far as believers are concerned—we should be on our guard. Some good men think themselves entitled to reason thus—"I am a Christian. I shall be an assessor in the judgment. For me there is, therefore, no judgment day." And it is even held out as an inducement to others to close with this conclusion, that they "shall be delivered from the bugbear of judgment."

The origin of this notion seems to be in certain universal tendencies of modern religious thought.

The idolatry of the immediate—the prompt creation of effect—is the perpetual snare of *revivalism*. *Revivalism* is thence fatally bound at once to follow the tide of emotion, and to increase the volume of the waters by which it is swept along. But the religious emotion of this generation has one characteristic by which it is distinguished from that of previous centuries. The revivalism of the past in all Churches rode upon the dark waves of fear. It worked upon human nature by exaggerated material descriptions of hell, by solemn appeals to the throne of Judgment. Certain schools of biblical criticism have enabled men to steel themselves against this form of preaching. An age of soft humanitarian sentiment—superficial, and inclined to forget that perfect Goodness may be a very real cause of fear—must be stirred by emotions of a different kind. The infinite sweetness of our Father's heart—the conclusions, illogically but effectively drawn from this, of

an Infinite good-nature, with its easy-going pardon, reconciliation all round, and exemption from all that is unpleasant—these, and such as these, are the only available materials for creating a great volume of emotion. An invertebrate creed; punishment either annihilated or mitigated; judgment, changed from a solemn and universal assize, a bar at which every soul must stand, to a splendid, and—for all who can say I *am saved*—a triumphant pageant in which they have no anxious concern; these are the readiest instruments, the most powerful leverage, with which to work extensively upon masses of men at the present time. And the seventh article of the Apostles' Creed must pass into the limbo of exploded superstition.

The only appeal to Scripture which such persons make, with any show of plausibility, is contained in an exposition of our Lord's teaching in a part of the fifth chapter of the fourth Gospel.[1] But clearly there are three Resurrection scenes which may be discriminated in those words. The first is spiritual, a present awakening of dead souls,[2] in those with whom the Son of Man is brought into contact in His earthly ministry. The second is a department of the same spiritual Resurrection. The Son of God, with that mysterious gift of Life in Himself,[3] has within Him a perpetual spring of rejuvenescence for a faded and dying world. A renewal of hearts is in process during all the days of time, a passage for soul after soul out of death into life.[4] The third scene is the general Resurrection and general Judgment.[5] The first was the resurrection of comparatively few; the second of many

[1] John v. 21, 29. [2] Ver. 21. [3] Ver. 26.
[4] Ver. 24. [5] Ver. 28, 29.

the third of all. If it is said that the believer "cometh not into *judgment*," the word in that place plainly signifies *condemnation*.[1]

Clear and plain above all such subtleties ring out the awe-inspiring words: "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the Judgment;" "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ."[2]

Reason supplies us with two great arguments for the General Judgment. One from the conscience of history, so to speak; the other from the individual conscience.

1. General history points to a general judgment. If there is no such judgment to come, then there is no one definite moral purpose in human society. Progress would be a melancholy word, a deceptive appearance, a stream that has no issue, a road that leads nowhere. No one who believes that there is a Personal God, Who guides the course of human affairs, can come to the conclusion that the generations of man are to go on for ever without a winding-up, which shall decide upon the doings of all who take part in human life. In the philosophy of nature, the affirmation or denial of purpose is the affirmation or denial of God. So in the philosophy of history. Society without the

[1] The writer ventures to lament the substitution of "judgment" for "condemnation," ver. 24. R.V. It is a verbal consistency, or minute accuracy, purchased at the heavy price of a false thought, suggested to many readers who are not scholars. "In John's language κρίσις is, (*a*) that *judgment* which came in pain and misery to those who rejected the salvation offered to mankind by Christ, iii. 19, κ.τ.λ., ἔρχεσθαι εἰς κρίσιν, to *fall into the state of one thus condemned*, v. 24. (*b*) Judgment of condemnation to the wicked, with ensuing rejection, v. 29." Grimm. Lex. N.T. 247. Between this passage of the fourth Gospel and Apoc. xx., there is a marvellous inner harmony of thought. "The first resurrection" (ver. 6) = John v. 21, 26; then vv. 11, 12, 13 = John v. 28, 29.

[2] Heb. ix. 27; 2 Cor. v. 10, cf. Rom. xiv. 10; Apoc. xx. 11, 12, 13.

General Judgment would be a chaos of random facts, a thing without rational retrospect or definite end—*i.e.*, without God. If man is under the government of God, human history is a drama, long-drawn, and of infinite variety, with inconceivably numerous actors. But a drama must have a last act. The last act of the drama of history is "The Day of the Judgment."

2. The other argument is derived from the individual conscience.

Conscience, as a matter of fact, has two voices. One is *imperative;* it tells us what we are to do. One is *prophetic*, and warns us of something which we are to receive. If there is to be no Day of the General Judgment, then the million prophecies of conscience will be belied, and our nature prove to be mendacious to its very roots.

There is no essential article of the Christian creed like this which can be isolated from the rest, and treated as if it stood alone. There is a *solidarity* of each with all the rest. Any which is isolated is in danger itself, and leaves the others exposed. For they have an internal harmony and congruity. They do not form a hotch-pot of credenda. They are not so many *beliefs* but one *belief*. Thus the isolation of articles is perilous. For, when we try to grasp and to defend one of them, we have no means left of measuring it but by terms of comparison which are drawn from ourselves, which must therefore be finite, and by the inadequacy of the scale which they present, appear to render the article of faith thus detached incredible. Moreover, each article of our creed is a revelation of the Divine attributes, which meet together in unity. To divide the attributes by dividing the form in which they are revealed to us, is to belie and falsify the attribute; to

give a monstrous development to one by not taking into account some other which is its balance and compensation. Thus, many men deny the truth of a punishment which involves final separation from God. They glory in the legal judgment which "dismisses hell with costs." But they do so by fixing their attention exclusively upon the one dogma which reveals one attribute of God. They isolate it from the Fall, from the Redemption by Christ, from the gravity of sin, from the truth that all whom the message of the Gospel reaches may avoid the penal consequences of sin. It is impossible to face the dogma of eternal separation from God without facing the dogma of Redemption. For Redemption involves in its very idea the intensity of sin, which needed the sacrifice of the Son of God; and further, the fact that the offer of salvation is so free and wide that it cannot be put away without a terrible wilfulness.

In dealing with many of the articles of the creed, there are opposite extremes. Exaggeration leads to a revenge upon them which is, perhaps, more perilous than neglect. Thus, as regards eternal punishment, in one country ghastly exaggerations were prevalent. It was assumed that the vast majority of mankind "are destined to everlasting punishment"; that "the floor of hell is crawled over by hosts of babies a span long." The inconsistency of such views with the love of God, and with the best instincts of man, was victoriously and passionately demonstrated. Then unbelief turned upon the dogma itself, and argued, with wide acceptance, that "with the overthrow of this conception goes the whole redemption-plan, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, and the grand climax of the Church-scheme, the General Judgment." But the alleged article

of faith was simply an exaggeration of that faith, and the objections lay altogether against the exaggeration of it.

II.

We have now to speak of the removal of that terror which accompanies the conception of the Day of the Judgment, and of the sole means of that emancipation which St. John recognises. For terror there is in every point of the repeated descriptions of Scripture—in the surroundings, in the summons, in the tribunal, in the trial, in one of the two sentences.

"God is love," writes St. John, "and he that abideth in love abideth in God: and God abideth in him. In this [abiding], love stands perfected *with us*,[1] and the object is nothing less than this," not that we may be exempted from judgment, but that "we may have boldness in the Day of the Judgment." Boldness! It is the splendid word which denotes the citizen's right of free speech, the masculine privilege of courageous liberty.[2] It is the tender word which expresses the child's unhesitating confidence, in "saying all out" to the parent. The ground of the boldness is conformity to Christ. Because "as He *is*," with that vivid idealizing sense, frequent in St. John when he uses it of our Lord—"as He is," delineated in the fourth Gospel, seen

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[1] μεθ' ἡμῶν—God's love in itself is perfected. It might be made as perfect as man's nature will admit by an instantaneous act; but God works jointly, in companionship with us. The grace of God "preventing us that we may will, *works with us* when we will." The essential idea of μετά is *companionship* or *connexion*. (See Donaldson, *Gr. Gr.*, 50, 52 *a*.)

[2] ἐλευθερίας ἡ πόλις μεστὴ καὶ παρρησίας γίγνεται. (Plat., *Rep.*, 557 B). The word is derived from πᾶν and ῥῆσις.

by "the eye of the heart"[1] with constant reverence in the soul, with adoring wonder in heaven, perfectly true, pure, and righteous—"even so" (not, of course, with any equality in degree to that consummate ideal, but with a likeness ever growing, an aspiration ever advancing[2])—"so are we in this world," purifying ourselves as He is pure.

Let us draw to a definite point our considerations upon the Judgment, and the Apostle's sweet encouragement for the "day of wrath, that dreadful day."

It is of the essence of the Christian faith to believe that the Son of God, in the Human Nature which He assumed, and which He has borne into heaven, shall come again, and gather all before Him, and pass sentence of condemnation or of peace according to their works. To hold this is necessary to prevent terrible doubts of the very existence of God; to guard us against sin, in view of that solemn account; to comfort us under affliction.

What a thought for us, if we would but meditate upon it! Often we complain of a commonplace life, of mean and petty employment. How can it be so, when at the end we, and those with whom we live, must look upon that great, overwhelming sight! Not an eye that shall not see Him, not a knee that shall not bow, not an ear that shall not hear the sentence. The heart might sink and the imagination quail under the burden of the supernatural existence which we cannot escape. One of two looks we must turn upon the Crucified—one willing as that which we cast on some glorious picture, on the enchantment of the sky; the other unwilling and abject. We should weep first with

[1] Ephes. i. 18. [2] Cf. Matt. v. 48.

Zechariah's mourners, with tears at once bitter because they are for sin, and sweet because they are for Christ.

But, above all things, let us hear how St. John sings us the sweet low hymn that breathes consolation through the terrible fall of the triple hammer-stroke of the rhyme in the *Dies iræ*. We must seek to lead upon earth a life laid on the lines of Christ's. Then, when the Day of the Judgment comes; when the cross of fire (so, at least, the early Christians thought) shall stand in the black vault; when the sacred wounds of Him who was pierced shall stream over with a light beyond dawn or sunset; we shall find that the discipline of life is complete, that God's love after all its long working with us stands perfected, so that we shall be able, as citizens of the kingdom, as children of the Father, to say out all. A Christlike character in an un-Christlike world—this is the cure of the disease of terror. Any other is but the medicine of a quack. "There is no fear in love; but the perfect love casteth out fear, because fear brings punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love."[1]

We may well close with that pregnant commentary on this verse which tells us of the four possible conditions of a human soul—"without either fear or love; with fear, without love; with fear and love; with love, without fear."[2]

NOTES.

Ch. iv. 7, v. 3.

Ver. 3. This verse should divide about the middle.

[1] Ver. 18.

[2] Bengel. The writer must acknowledge his obligation to Professor Westcott, whose exposition gives us a peculiar conception of the depth of St. John's teaching here. (*The Epistles of St. John*, 149-153).

SECTION IX.

GREEK.

Καὶ αἱ ἐντολαὶ αὐτοῦ βαρεῖαι οὐκ εἰσίν· ὅτι πᾶν τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ νικᾷ τὸν κόσμον· καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ νίκη ἡ νικήσασα τὸν κόσμον, ἡ πίστις ἡμῶν. τίς ἐστιν ὁ νικῶν τὸν κόσμον, εἰ μὴ ὁ πιστεύων ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ; Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἐλθὼν δι' ὕδατος καὶ αἵματος, Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστός· οὐκ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι μόνον, ἀλλ' ἐν τῷ ὕδατι καὶ ἐν τῷ αἵματι· καὶ τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστι τὸ μαρτυροῦν, ὅτι τὸ πνεῦμα ἐστιν ἡ ἀλήθεια. ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες, τὸ πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα· καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἕν εἰσιν. Εἰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαμβάνομεν, ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ Θεοῦ μείζων ἐστίν· ὅτι αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία

LATIN.

Et mandata eius gravia non sunt. Quoniam omne quod natum est ex Deo vincit mundum: et hæc est victoria quæ vincit mundum, fides nostra. Qui est qui vincit mundum nisi qui credit quoniam Iesus est Filius Dei? Hic est qui venit per aquam et sanguinem, Iesus Christus: non in aqua solem, sed in aqua et sanguine. Et Spiritus est qui testificatur quoniam Christus est veritas. Quia tres sunt qui testimonium dant, Spiritus et aqua et sanguis, et tres unum sunt. Si testimonium hominum accipimus, testimonium Dei maius est: quoniam hoc est testimonium Dei quod maius est, quia testi-

AUTHORISED VERSION.

And His commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? This is He that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and

REVISED VERSION.

And His commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, *even* our faith. And who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? This is He that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one. If we receive the witness

ANOTHER VERSION.

And His commandments are not heavy, for whatsoever is born of God conquereth the world: and this is the conquest that hath conquered the world—the Faith of us. Who is he that is conquering the world, but he that is believing that Jesus is the Son of God? This is He that came by water and blood—Jesus Christ: not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. And the Spirit is that which is ever witnessing that the Spirit is the truth. For three are they who are ever witnessing, the Spirit and the water and the blood: and the three agree in one.

If we receive the witness of men the wit-

τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὅτι μεμαρτύρηκεν περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ. ὁ πιστεύων εἰς τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἔχει τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἐν αὐτῷ. ὁ μὴ πιστεύων τῷ Θεῷ, ψεύστην πεποίηκεν αὐτόν, ὅτι οὐ πεπίστευκεν εἰς τὴν μαρτυρίαν, ἣν μεμαρτύρηκεν ὁ Θεὸς περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ. Καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία ὅτι ζωὴν αἰώνιον ἔδωκεν ἡμῖν ὁ Θεός· καὶ αὕτη ἡ ζωὴ ἐν τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ ἐστιν. ὁ ἔχων τὸν υἱόν, ἔχει τὴν ζωήν· ὁ μὴ ἔχων τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, τὴν ζωὴν οὐκ ἔχει. Ταῦτα ἔγραψα ὑμῖν ἵνα εἰδῆτε ὅτι ζωὴν ἔχετε αἰώνιον, οἱ πιστεύοντες εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ. Καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ παρρησία ἣν ἔχομεν πρὸς αὐτόν, ὅτι ἐάν τι αἰτώμεθα κατὰ τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ, ἀκούει ἡμῶν· καὶ ἐὰν οἴδαμεν ὅτι ἀκούει ἡμῶν ὃ ἂν αἰτώμεθα, οἴδαμεν ὅτι

ficatus est de Filio suo. Qui credit in Filio Dei, habet testimonium Dei in se: qui non credit mendacem facit eum: quoniam non credidit in testimonio quod testificatus est Deus de Filio suo. Et hoc est testimonium, quoniam vitam eternam dedit nobis Deus, et hæc vitam in Filio eius. Qui habet Filium habet vitam: qui non habet filium vitam non habet. Hæc scripsi vobis ut sciatis quoniam vitam habetis æternam, qui creditis in nomine Filii Dei. Et hæc est fiducia quam habemus ad eum quia quodcumque petierimus secundum voluntatem eius audit nos. Et scimus quoniam audit nos quicquid petierimus, scimus quoniam habemus petitiones quas postulamus ab eo.

the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and

of men, the witness of God is greater: for the witness of God is this, that He hath borne witness concerning His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar: because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning His Son. And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life. These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, *even* unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the boldness which we have toward Him, that,

ness of God is greater; because the witness of God is this, because (*I say*) He hath witnessed concerning His Son. He that is believing on the Son of God hath the witness in him, he that is not believing God hath made Him a liar: because he is not a believer in the witness that God witnessed concerning His Son. And this is the witness, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath the life, he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life. These things have I written unto you that ye may know that ye have eternal life—ye that are believing in the name of the Son of God! And this is the boldness which we have to Himward, that

ἴχομεν τὰ αἰτήματα ἃ ᾐτήκαμεν παρ' αὐτοῦ. Ἐάν τις ἴδῃ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἁμαρτάνοντα ἁμαρτίαν μὴ πρὸς θάνατον, αἰτήσει, καὶ δώσει αὐτῷ ζωὴν τοῖς ἁμαρτάνουσι μὴ πρὸς θάνατον. ἔστιν ἁμαρτία πρὸς θάνατον· οὐ περὶ ἐκείνης λέγω ἵνα ἐρωτήσῃ· πᾶσα ἀδικία ἁμαρτία ἐστίν, καὶ ἔστιν ἁμαρτία οὐ πρὸς θανατον.

Qui scit fratrem suum peccare peccatum non ad mortem, petit, et dabit ei vitam, peccantibus non ad mortem. Est peccatum ad mortem: non pro illo dico ut roget quis. Omnis iniquitas peccatum est: et est peccatum ad mortem.

that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him. If any man see his brother sin a sin *which is* not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him. If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and *God* will give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: not concerning this do I say that he should make request. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

if we ask any thing according to His will, He is hearing us: and if we know that He is hearing us, we know that we have the desires that we have desired from Him. If any man see his brother sinning sin not unto death, he shall ask, and *God* shall give him life—(I *mean* for those who are not sinning unto death). Not concerning this *sin* am I saying that he should make request. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not unto death.

DISCOURSE XI.

BIRTH AND VICTORY.

"And His commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"—I JOHN v. 3, 4, 5.

ST. JOHN here connects the Christian Birth with Victory. He tells us that of the supernatural life the destined and (so to speak) natural end is conquest.

Now in this there is a *contrast* between the law of nature and the law of grace. No doubt the first is marvellous. It may even, if we will, in one sense be termed a victory; for it is the proof of a successful contest with the blind fatalities of natural environment. It is in itself the conquest of a something which has conquered a world below it. The first faint cry of the baby is a wail no doubt; but in its very utterance there is a half triumphant undertone. Boyhood, youth, opening manhood—at least in those who are physically and intellectually gifted—generally possess some share of "the rapture of the strife" with nature and with their contemporaries.

> "Youth hath triumphal mornings; its days bound
> From night as from a victory."

But sooner or later that which pessimists style "the martyrdom of life" sets in. However brightly the

drama opens, the last scene is always tragic. Our natural birth inevitably ends in defeat.

A birth and a defeat is thus the epitome of each life which is naturally brought into the field of our present human existence. The defeat is sighed over, sometimes consummated, in every cradle; it is attested by every grave.

But if birth and defeat is the motto of the natural life, Birth and victory is the motto of every one born into the city of God.

This victory is spoken of in our verses as a victory along the whole line. It is the conquest of the collective Church, of the whole mass of regenerate humanity, so far as it has been true to the principle of its birth[1]—the conquest of the Faith which is "The Faith of *us*,"[2] who are knit together in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of the Son of God, Christ our Lord. But it is something more than that. The general victory is also a victory in detail. Every true individual believer shares in it.[3] The battle is a battle of soldiers. The abstract ideal victory is realised and made concrete in each life of struggle which is a life of enduring faith. The triumph is not merely one of a school, or of a party. The question rings with a triumphant challenge down the ranks—"who is the ever-conqueror of the world, but the ever-believer that Jesus is the Son of God?"

We are thus brought to two of St. John's great master-conceptions, both of which came to him from *hearing* the Lord who is the Life—both of which are

[1] This is expressed, after St. John's fashion, by the neuter, πᾶν τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ. ver. 4.

[2] ἡ πίστις ἡμῶν, ver. 4.

[3] ὁ νικῶν τὸν κόσμον, ὁ πιστεύων, ver. 5.

to be read in connection with the fourth Gospel—the Christian's *Birth* and his *victory*.

I.

The Apostle introduces the idea of the Birth which has its origin from God precisely by the same process to which attention has already been more than once directed.

St. John frequently mentions some great subject; at first like a musician who with perfect command of his instrument, touches what seems to be an almost random key, faintly, as if incidentally and half wandering from his theme. But just as the sound appears to be absorbed by the purpose of the composition, or all but lost in the distance, the same chord is struck again more decidedly; and then, after more or less interval, is brought out with a music so full and sonorous, that we perceive that it has been one of the master's leading ideas from the very first. So, when the subject is first spoken of, we hear—"every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him."[1] The subject is suspended for a while; then comes a somewhat more marked reference. "Whosoever is born of God is not a doer of sin; and he cannot continue sinning, because of God he is born." There is yet one more tender recurrence to the favourite theme—"every one that loveth is born of God."[2] Then, finally here at last the chord, so often struck, grown bolder since the prelude, gathers all the music round it. It interweaves with itself another strain which has similarly been gaining amplitude of volume in its course, until we have a great *Te Deum*, dominated by two chords of

[1] 1 John ii. 29. [2] 1 John iv. 7.

Birth and Victory. "This *is* the conquest that has *conquered* the world—the Faith which is of us."

We shall never come to any adequate notion of St. John's conception of the Birth of God, without tracing the place in his Gospel to which his asterisk in this place refers. To one passage only can we turn—our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God—except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."[1] The germ of the idea of entrance into the city, the kingdom of God, by means of a new birth, is in that storehouse of theological conceptions, the psalter. There is one psalm of a Korahite seer, enigmatical it may be, shadowed with the darkness of a divine compression,[2] obscure from the glory that rings it round, and from the gush of joy in its few and broken words. The 87th Psalm is the psalm of the font, the hymn of regeneration. The nations once of the world are mentioned among them that know the Lord. They are counted when He writeth up the peoples. Glorious things are spoken of the City of God. Three times over the burden of the song is the new birth by which the aliens were made free of Sion.

This one was born there,
This one and that one was born in her,
This one was born there.[3]

All joyous life is thus brought into the city of the new-born. "The singers, the solemn dances, the fresh

[1] John iii. 5.

[2] *σφόδρα αἰνιγματώδης καὶ σκοτεινῶς εἰρημένος.* Euseb.

[3] זֶה יֻלַּד־שָׁם. Ver. 4.
אִישׁ וְאִישׁ יֻלַּד־בָּהּ. Ver. 5.
זֶה יֻלַּד־שָׁם. Ver. 6. Psalm lxxxvii.

and glancing springs, are in thee."[1] Hence, from the notification of men being born again in order to see and enter into the kingdom, our Lord, as if in surprise, meets the Pharisee's question—"how can these things be?"—with another—"art thou that teacher in Israel, and understandest not these things?" Jesus tells His Church for ever that every one of His disciples must be brought into contact with two worlds, with two influences—one outward, the other inward; one material, the other spiritual; one earthly, the other heavenly; one visible and sacramental, the other invisible and divine. Out of these he must come forth new-born.

Of course it may be said that "the water" here coupled with the Spirit is *figurative*. But let it be observed first, that from the very constitution of St. John's intellectual and moral being things outward and visible were not annihilated by the spiritual transparency which he imparted to them. Water, literal water, is everywhere in his writings. In his Gospel more especially he seems to be ever seeing, ever hearing it. He loved it from the associations of his own early life, and from the mention made of it by his Master. And as in the Gospel water is, so to speak, one of the three great factors and centres of the book;[2] so now in the Epistle, it still seems to glance and murmur before him. "The water" is one of the three abiding

[1] "Both they who sing and they who dance,
With sacred song are there;
In thee fresh brooks and soft streams glance,
And all my fountains clear."
MILTON, Paraphrase Ps. lxxxvii. 7.

This, on the whole, seems to be considered the most tenable interpretation.

[2] John i. 26, ii. 6, 9, iii. 5-22, iv. 6-16, v. 3, vii. 37, 39, ix. 7, xiii. 1-5, xix. 34.

witnesses in the Epistle also. Surely, then, our Apostle would be eminently unlikely to express "the Spirit of God" *without* the outward water by "water *and* the Spirit." But above all, Christians should beware of a "licentious and deluding alchemy of interpretation which maketh of anything whatsoever it listeth." In immortal words—"when the letter of the law hath two things plainly and expressly specified, water and the Spirit; water, as a duty required on our part, the Spirit, as a gift which God bestoweth; there is danger in so presuming to interpret it, as if the clause which concerneth ourselves were more than needed. We may by such rare expositions attain perhaps in the end to be thought witty, but with ill advice."[1]

But, it will further be asked, whether we bring the Saviour's saying—"except any one be born again of water and the Spirit"—into direct connection with the baptism of infants? Above all, whether we are not encouraging every baptised person to hold that somehow or other he will have a part in the victory of the regenerate?

We need no other answer than that which is implied in the very force of the word here used by St. John—"all that is born of God conquereth the world." "That is born" is the participle perfect.[2] The force of the perfect is not simply past action, but such action lasting on in its effects. Our text, then, speaks only

[1] Hooker, *E. P.*, V. lix. (4).

[2] So the perfect is used throughout. γεγέννηται. ii. 29, iii. 9, iv. 7. πᾶν τὸ γεγεννημένον. v. 4. Very remarkably below, πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος—ἀλλὰ ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ; the first of the regenerate man who continues in that condition of grace, the second of the Begotten Son of God who keeps His servant. 1 John v. 18.

of those who having been born again into the kingdom continue in a corresponding condition, and unfold the life which they have received. The Saviour spoke first and chiefly of the initial act. The Apostle's circumstances, now in his old age, naturally led him to look on from that. St. John is no "idolater of the immediate." Has the gift received by his spiritual children worn long and lasted well? What of the new life which should have issued from the New Birth? Regenerate in the past, are they renewed in the present?

This simple piece of exegesis lets us at once perceive that another verse in this Epistle, often considered of almost hopeless perplexity, is in truth only the perfection of sanctified (nay, it may be said, of moral) commonsense; an intuition of moral and spiritual instinct. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." We have just seen the real significance of the words "he that is born of God"—he for whom his past birth lasts on in its effects. "He *doeth* not sin," is not a sin-doer, makes it not his "trade," as an old commentator says. Nay, "he is not able to be" (to keep on) "sinning." "He cannot sin." He cannot! There is no physical impossibility. Angels will not sweep him away upon their resistless pinions. The Spirit will not hold him by the hand as if with a mailed grasp, until the blood spirts from his finger-tips, that he may not take the wine-cup, or walk out to the guilty assignation. The compulsion of God is like that which is exercised upon us by some pathetic wounded-looking face that gazes after us with a sweet reproach. Tell the honest poor man with a large family of some safe and expeditious way of transferring his neighbour's money to his own pocket. He will answer, "I cannot steal;"

that is, "I cannot steal, however much it may physically be within my capacity, without a burning shame, an agony to my nature worse than death." On some day of fierce heat, hold a draught of iced wine to a total abstainer, and invite him to drink. "I cannot," will be his reply. Cannot! He can, so far as his hand goes; he cannot, without doing violence to a conviction, to a promise, to his own sense of truth. And he who continues in the fulness of his God-given Birth "does not *do* sin," "cannot be sinning." Not that he is sinless, not that he never fails, or does not sometimes fall; not that sin ceases to be sin to him, because he thinks that he has a standing in Christ. But he cannot go on in sin without being untrue to his birth; without a stain upon that finer, whiter, more sensitive conscience, which is called "spirit" in a son of God; without a convulsion in his whole being which is the precursor of death, or an insensibility which is death actually begun.

How many such texts as these are practically useless to most of us! The armoury of God is full of keen swords which we refrain from handling, because they have been misused by others. None is more neglected than this. The fanatic has shrieked out—"sin in my case!" I *cannot* sin. *I* may hold a sin in my bosom; and God may hold me in His arms for all that. At least, I may hold that which would be a sin in you and most others; but to *me* it is *not* sin." On the other hand, stupid goodness maunders out some unintelligible paraphrase, until pew and reader yawn from very weariness. Divine truth in its purity and plainness is thus discredited by the exaggeration of the one, or buried in the leaden winding-sheet of the stupidity of the other.

In leaving this portion of our subject we may com-

pare the view latent in the very idea of infant baptism with that of the leader of a well-known sect upon the beginnings of the spiritual life in children.

"May not children grow up into salvation, without knowing the exact moment of their conversion?" asks "General" Booth. His answer is—"yes, it may be so; and we trust that in the future this will be the usual way in which children may be brought to Christ." The writer goes on to tell us how the New Birth will take place in future. "When the conditions named in the first pages of this volume are complied with—when the parents are godly, and the children are surrounded by holy influences and examples from their birth, and trained up in the spirit of their early dedication—they will *doubtless come to know and love and trust their Saviour in the ordinary course of things.* The Holy Ghost will take possession of them from the first. Mothers and fathers will, as it were, put them into the Saviour's arms in their swaddling clothes, and He will take them, and bless them, and sanctify them from the very womb, and make them His own, without their knowing the hour or the place when they pass from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. In fact, with such little ones it shall never be very dark, for their natural birth shall be, as it were, in the spiritual twilight, which begins with the dim dawn, and increases gradually until the noonday brightness is reached; so answering to the prophetic description, 'The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.'"[1]

No one will deny that this is tenderly and beautifully

[1] *Training of children; or How to Make the Children into Saints and Soldiers of Jesus Christ.* By the General of the Salvation Army. London: Salvation Army Book Stores, pp. 162, 163.

written. But objections to its teaching will crowd upon the mind of thoughtful Christians. It seems to defer to a period in the future, to a new era incalculably distant, when Christendom shall be absorbed in Salvationism, that which St. John in his day contemplated as the normal condition of believers, which the Church has always held to be capable of realization, which has been actually realized in no few whom most of us must have known. Further; the fountain-heads of thought, like those of the Nile, are wrapped in obscurity. By what process grace may work with the very young is an insoluble problem in psychology, which Christianity has not revealed. We know nothing further than that Christ blessed little children. That blessing was *impartial*, for it was communicated to all who were brought to Him; it was *real*, otherwise He would not have blessed them at all. That He conveys to them such grace as they are capable of receiving is all that we can know. And yet again; the Salvationist theory exalts parents and surroundings into the place of Christ. It deposes His sacrament, which lies at the root of St. John's language, and boasts that it will secure Christ's end, apparently without any recognition of Christ's *means*.

II.

The second great idea in the verses at the head of this discourse is *Victory*. The intended issue of the New Birth is conquest—"all that is born of God conquers the world."

The idea of victory is almost[1] exclusively confined

[1] Not quite, cf. Rom. viii. 37, xii. 21; 1 Cor. xv. 55, 57. The substantive νίκη occurs only 1 John v. 4. A slightly different form (νῖκος) is in Matt. xii. 20; 1 Cor. xv. 54, 55, 57.

to St. John's writings. The idea is first expressed by Jesus—"be of good cheer: I have conquered the world."[1] The first prelusive touch in the Epistle, hints at the fulfilment of the Saviour's comfortable word in one class of the Apostle's spiritual children. "I write unto you, young men, because ye have conquered the wicked one. I have written unto you, young men, because ye have conquered the wicked one."[2] Next, a bolder and ampler strain—"ye are of God, little children, and have conquered them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world."[3] Then with a magnificent persistence, the trumpet of Christ wakens echoes to its music all down and round the defile through which the host is passing—"all that is born of God conquereth the world: and this is the conquest that has conquered the world—the Faith which is ours."[4] When, in St. John's other great book, we pass with the seer into Patmos, the air is, indeed, "full of noises and sweet sounds." But dominant over all is a storm of triumph, a passionate exultation of victory. Thus each epistle to each of the seven Churches closes with a promise "to him that *conquereth*."

The text promises *two* forms of victory.

1. A victory is promised to the Church universal. "*All that* is born of God conquereth the world." This conquest is concentrated in, almost identified with "the Faith." Primarily, in this place, the term (here alone

[1] John xvi. 33.

[2] 1 John ii. 13, 14.

[3] 1 John iv. 4.

[4] It does not seem possible to convey to the English reader the fourfold harping upon the word (1 John v. 4, 5) by any other rendering. "The *victory* that hath *overcome* the world" (R.V.) fails in this. The noble translation of ὑπερνικῶμεν (Rom. viii. 27), happily retained by the Revisers, is rendered consistent by the translation here proposed.

found in our Epistle) is not the faith by *which we believe*, but the Faith *which is* believed—as in some other places;[1] not faith subjective, but The Faith objectively. Here is the dogmatic principle. The Faith involves definite knowledge of definite principles. The religious knowledge, which is not capable of being put into definite propositions, we need not trouble ourselves greatly about. But we are guarded from over-dogmatism. The word "of us" which follows "the Faith" is a mediating link between the objective and the subjective. First, we possess this Faith as a common heritage. Then, as in the Apostle's creed we begin to individualise this common possession by prefixing "I believe" to every article of it. Then the victory contained in the creed, the victory which the creed *is* (for more truly again than of Duty may it be said of Faith, "thou who *art victory*"[2]), is made over to each who believes. Each, and each alone, who in soul is ever believing, in practice is ever victorious.

This declaration is full of promise for missionary work. There is no system of error, however ancient, subtle, or highly organised, which must not go down before the strong collective life of the regenerate. No less encouraging is it at home. No form of sin is incapable of being overthrown. No school of anti-Christian thought is invulnerable or invincible. There are other apostates besides Julian who will cry—"Galilæe, vicisti!"

2. The second victory promised is individual, for each of us. Not only where cathedral-spires lift high the triumphant cross; on battle-fields which have added kingdoms to Christendom; by the martyr's stake, or in the arena of the Coliseum, have these words proved

[1] Apoc. ii. 13, xiv. 12.

[2] "Thou who art victory!"
WORDSWORTH, *Ode to Duty*.

true. The victory comes down to us. In hospitals, in shops, in courts, in ships, in sick-rooms, they are fulfilled for us. We see their truth in the patience, sweetness, resignation, of little children, of old men, of weak women. They give a high consecration and a glorious meaning to much of the suffering that we see. What, we are sometimes tempted to cry—is *this* Christ's Army? are these His soldiers, who can go anywhere and do anything? Poor weary ones! with white lips, and the beads of death-sweat on their faces, and the thorns of pain ringed like a crown round their foreheads; so wan, so worn, so tired, so suffering, that even our love dares not pray for them to live a little longer yet. Are these the elect of the elect, the vanguard of the regenerate, who carry the flag of the cross where its folds are waved by the storm of battle; whom St. John sees advancing up the slope with such a burst of cheers and such a swell of music that the words—"this is the conquest"—spring spontaneously from his lips? Perhaps the angels answer with a voice which we cannot hear—"whatsoever is born of God conquereth the world." May we fight so manfully that each may render if not his "pure" yet his purified

> "soul unto his captain Christ,
> Under whose colours he hath fought so long:"

—that we may know something of the great text in the Epistle to the Romans, with its matchless translation —"we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us"[1]—that arrogance of victory which is at once so splendid and so saintly.

[1] Rom. viii. 37.

DISCOURSE XII.

THE GOSPEL AS A GOSPEL OF WITNESS; THE THREE WITNESSES.

"It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater, for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself."—1 JOHN v. 6-10.

IT has been said that Apostles and apostolic men were as far as possible removed from common-sense, and have no conception of evidence in our acceptation of the word. About this statement there is scarcely even superficial plausibility. Common-sense is the measure of ordinary human tact among palpable realities. In relation to human existence it is the balance of the estimative faculties; the instinctive summary of inductions which makes us rightly credulous and rightly incredulous, which teaches us the supreme lesson of life, when to say "yes," and when to say "no." Uncommon sense is superhuman tact among no less real but at present impalpable realities; the spiritual faculty of forming spiritual inductions aright. So St. John among the three great canons of primary truth with which he closes his Epistle writes—"we know that the Son of God hath come and is present, and hath given us understanding, that we know Him who is

true."[1] So with *evidences.* Apostles did not draw them out with the same logical precision, or rather not in the same logical form. Yet they rested their conclusions upon the same abiding principle of evidence, the primary axiom of our entire social life, that there is a degree of human evidence which practically cannot deceive. "If we receive the witness of men." The form of expression implies that we certainly do.[2]

Peculiar difficulty has been felt in understanding the paragraph. And one portion of it remains difficult after any explanation. But we shall succeed in apprehending it as a whole only upon condition of taking one guiding principle of interpretation with us.

The word *witness* is St. John's central thought here. He is determined to beat it into our thoughts by the most unsparing iteration. He repeats it ten times over, as substantive or verb, in six verses.[3] His object is to turn our attention to his Gospel, and to this distinguishing feature of it—its being from beginning to end a Gospel of *witness.* This witness he declares to be fivefold. (1) The witness of the Spirit, of which the fourth Gospel is pre-eminently full. (2) The witness of the Divine Humanity, of the God-Man who is not man deified, but God humanified. This verse is no

[1] *δέδωκεν ἡμῖν διάνοιαν ἵνα γινώσκομεν κ.τ.λ.* 1 John v. 20. N. T. lexicographers gives as its meaning *intelligentia* (*einsicht*). See Grimm. *Bretschn.*, s.v.) Prof. Westcott remarks that "generally nouns which express intellectual powers are rare in St. John's writings." But *διάνοια* is the word by which the LXX. translate the Hebrew לֵב, and has thus a moral and emotional tinge imparted to it. We may compare the sense in which Aristotle uses it in his Poetics for the cast of thought, or general sentiment. (*Poet.*, vi.)

[2] *εἰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαμβάνομεν.* 1 John v. 9.

[3] The A. V. (very unhappily) tried to minimise this reiteration by the introduction of synonyms in four places—"bear record," "record" (vv. 7, 10, 11), "hath testified (ver. 9).

doubt partly polemical, against heretics of the day, who would clip the great picture of the Gospel, and force it into the petty frame of their theory. This is He (the Apostle urges) who came on the stage of the world's and the Church's history[1] as the Messiah, under the condition, so to speak, of water and blood;[2] bringing with him, accompanied by, not the water only, but the water and the blood.[3] Cerinthus separated the Christ, the divine Æon, from Jesus the holy but mortal man. The two, the divine potency and the human existence, met at the waters of Jordan, on the day of the Baptism, when the Christ united himself to Jesus. But the union was brief and unessential. Before the crucifixion, the divine ideal Christ withdrew. The man suffered. The impassible immortal potency was far away in heaven. St. John denies the fortuitous juxta-position of two accidentally-united existences. We worship one Lord Jesus Christ, attested not only by Baptism in Jordan, the witness of water, but by the death on Calvary, the witness of blood. He came by water and blood, as the means by which His office was manifested; but with the water and with the blood, as the sphere in which He exercises that office. When we turn to the Gospel, and look at the pierced side, we read of blood and water, the order of actual history and physiological fact. Here St. John takes the ideal, mystical, sacramental order, water and blood—cleansing and redemption—and the sacraments which perpetually symbolise and convey them. Thus we have Spirit, water, blood. Three are they who are ever witnessing."[4] These are

[1] ὁ ἐλθών.

[2] δι ὕδατος καὶ αἵματος.

[3] οὐκ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι μόνον, ἀλλ' ἐν τῷ ὕδατι καὶ ἐν τῷ αἵματι.

[4] τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες, ver. 7.

three great centres round which St. John's Gospel turns.[1] These are the three genuine witnesses, the trinity of witness, the shadow of the Trinity in heaven. (3) Again the fourth Gospel is a Gospel of human witness, a tissue woven out of many lines of human attestation. It records the cries of human souls overheard and noted down at the supreme crisis-moment, from the Baptist, Philip, and Nathanael, to the everlasting spontaneous creed of Christendom on its knees before Jesus, the cry of Thomas ever rushing molten from a heart of fire—"my Lord and my God." (4) But if we receive, as we assuredly must and do receive, the overpowering and soul-subduing mass of attesting human evidence, how much more must we receive the Divine witness, the witness of God so conspicuously exhibited in the Gospel of St. John! "The witness of God is greater, because *this*" (even the history in the pages to which he adverts) "is the witness; because" (I say with triumphant reiteration) "He hath witnessed concerning His Son."[2] This witness of God in the last Gospel is given in four forms—by Scripture,[3] by the Father,[4] by the Son Himself,[5] by His works.[6] (5) This great volume of witness is consummated and brought home by another. He who not merely coldly assents to the word of Christ, but lifts the whole burden of his

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[1] The *Water*, John iii. 5, cf. i. 26-33, ii. 9, iii. 23, iv. 13, v. 4, ix. 7. The *Blood*, vi. 53, 54, 56, xix. 34. The *Spirit*, vii. 39, xiv., xv., xvi., xx. 22. The water centres in *Baptism* (iii. 5); the blood is symbolised, exhibited, in Holy *Communion* (vi.): the Spirit is perpetually making them effective.

[2] ὅτι αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ Θεοῦ ὅτι μεμαρτύρηκεν περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, ver. 9.

[3] v. 39, 46, etc. vii 18 xii. 25.

[4] viii. 17, 18.

[5] ver. 36

belief on to the Son of God,[1] hath the witness in him. That which was logical and external becomes internal and experimental.

In this ever-memorable passage, all know that an interpolation has taken place. The words—"in heaven the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth"—are a gloss. A great sentence of one of the first of critics may well reassure any weak believers who dread the candour of Christian criticism, or suppose that it has impaired the evidence for the great dogma of the Trinity. "If the fourth century knew that text, let it come in, in God's name; but if that age did not know it, then Arianism in its height was beaten down without the help of that verse; and, let the *fact* prove as it will, the *doctrine* is unshaken."[2] The human material with which they have been clamped should not blind us to the value of the heavenly jewels which seemed to be marred by their earthly setting.

It is constantly said—as we think with considerable misapprehension—that in his Epistle St. John may imply, but does not refer directly to any particular incident in, his Gospel. It is our conviction that St. John very specially includes the Resurrection—the central point of the evidences of Christianity—among the things attested by the witness of men. We propose in another discourse to examine the Resurrection from St. John's point of view.

[1] ὁ πιστεύων εἰς τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, ver. 10.
[2] Bentley, Letter of January 1st, 1717.

DISCOURSE XIII.

THE WITNESS OF MEN (APPLIED TO THE RESURRECTION).

"If we receive the witness of men."—1 JOHN v. 9.

AT an early period in the Christian Church the passage in which these words occur, was selected as a fitting Epistle for the First Sunday after Easter, when believers may be supposed to review the whole body of witness to the risen Lord and to triumph in the victory of faith. It will afford one of the best illustrations of that which is covered by the comprehensive canon—"if we receive the witness of men"—if we consider the unity of essential principles in the narratives of the Resurrection, and draw the natural conclusions from them.

I.

Let us note the unity of essential principles in the narratives of the Resurrection.

St. Matthew hastens on from Jerusalem to the appearance in Galilee. "Behold! He goeth before you *into Galilee*," is, in some sense, the key of the 28th chapter. St. Luke, on the other hand, speaks only of manifestations in Jerusalem or its neighbourhood.

Now St. John's Resurrection history falls in the 20th chapter into four pieces, with three manifestations in Jerusalem. The 21st chapter (the appendix-chapter)

also falls into four pieces, with one manifestation to the seven disciples in Galilee.

St. John makes no profession of telling us all the appearances which were known to the Church, or even all of which he was personally cognisant. In the treasures of the old man's memory there were many more which, for whatever reason, he did not write. But these distinct continuous specimens of a permitted communing with the eternal glorified life (supplemented on subsequent thought by another in the last chapter) are as good as three or four hundred for the great purpose of the Apostle. "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."[1]

Throughout St. John's narrative every impartial reader will find delicacy of thought, abundance of matter, minuteness of detail. He will find something more. While he feels that he is not in cloudland or dreamland, he will yet recognise that he walks in a land which is wonderful, because the central figure in it is One whose name is Wonderful. The fact is fact, and yet it is something more. For a short time poetry and history are absolutely coincident. Here, if anywhere, is Herder's saying true, that the fourth Gospel seems to be written with a feather which has dropped from an angel's wing.

The unity in essential principles which has been claimed for these narratives taken together is not a lifeless identity in details. It is scarcely to be worked out by the dissecting-maps of elaborate harmonies. It is not the imaginative unity which is poetry; nor the mechanical unity, which is fabrication; nor the

[1] The writer is entirely persuaded that St. John in chap. xx. 30, 31 refers to the *Resurrection* "signs," and not to miracles generally.

passionless unity, which is commended in a police-report. It is not the thin unity of plain-song; it is the rich unity of dissimilar tones blended into a fugue.

This unity may be considered in two essential agreements of the four Resurrection histories.

1. All the Evangelists agree in reticence on one point—in abstinence from one claim.

If any of us were framing for himself a body of such evidence for the Resurrection as should almost extort acquiescence, he would assuredly insist that the Lord should have been seen and recognised after the Resurrection by miscellaneous crowds—or, at the very least, by hostile individuals. Not only by a tender Mary Magdalene, an impulsive Peter, a rapt John, a Thomas through all his unbelief nervously anxious to be convinced. Let Him be seen by Pilate, by Caiaphas, by some of the Roman soldiers, of the priests, of the Jewish populace. Certainly, if the Evangelists had simply aimed at effective presentation of evidence, they would have put forward statements of this kind.

But the apostolic principle—the apostolic canon of Resurrection evidence—was very different. St. Luke has preserved it for us, as it is given by St. Peter. "Him God raised up the third day, and gave Him to be made manifest after He rose again from the dead, not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us."[1] He shall, indeed, appear again

[1] Acts x. 41, 42. It is to be regretted that the R. V. has not boldly given us such an arrangement of the words in this important passage as would at once connect "made manifest" with "after He rose again from the dead," and avoid making the Apostle state that the chosen witnesses ate and drank with Christ after the Resurrection. St. Peter mentions that particular characteristic of the Apostles which made them judges not to be gainsayed of the identity of the Risen One with Him with whom they used to eat and drink.

to all the people, to every eye; but that shall be at the great Advent. St. John, with his ideal tenderness, has preserved a word of Jesus, which gives us St. Peter's canon of Resurrection evidence, in a lovelier and more spiritual form. Christ as He rose at Easter should be visible, but only to the eye of love, only to the eye which life fills with tears and heaven with light—"yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me. . . He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will manifest Myself to Him."[1] Round that ideal canon St. John's Resurrection-history is twined with undying tendrils. Those words may be written by us with our softest pencils over the 20th and 21st chapters of the fourth Gospel. There is—very possibly there can be—under our present human conditions, no manifestation of Him who was dead and now liveth, except to belief, or to that kind of doubt which springs from love.

That which is true of St. John is true of all the Evangelists.

They take that Gospel, which is the life of their life. They bare its bosom to the stab of Celsus,[2] to the bitter sneer plagiarised by Renan—"why did He not appear to all, to His judges and enemies? Why only to one excitable woman, and a circle of His initiated?"

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[1] John xiv. 19-21.

[2] Τίς τοῦτο εἶδεν; γυνὴ πάροιστρος, καὶ εἴ τις ἄλλος τῶν ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς γοητείας. Ὅτε μὲν ἠπιστεῖτο ἐν σώματι πᾶσιν ἀνίδην (freely, without restraint) ἐκήρυττεν, ὅτε δὲ πίστιν ἂν ἰσχυρὰν παρεῖχεν ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστὰς ἐνὶ μόνῳ γυναίῳ καὶ τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ θεασιώταις (adepts, initiated) κρύβδην παρεφαίνετω . . . ἐχρῆν εἴπερ ὄντως θείαν δύναμιν ἐκφῆναι ἤθελεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς αὐτοῖς τοῖς ἐπηρεάσι καὶ τῷ καταδικάσαντι καὶ ὅλως πᾶσιν ὀφθῆναι. [Celsus, *ap. Orig.*, 2, 55, 59, 70, 63.] The passage is given in Rudolph Anger's invaluable *Synopsis Evang. cum locis qui supersunt parallelis litterarum et traditionum Evang. Irenæo. antiquiorum.* p. 254.

"The hallucination of a hysterical woman endowed Christendom with a risen God."[1] An apocryphal Gospel unconsciously violates this apostolic, or rather divine canon, by stating that Jesus gave His grave-clothes to one of the High Priest's servants.[2] There was every reason but one why St. John and the other Evangelists *should have* narrated such stories. There was only one reason why they *should not*, but that was all-sufficient. Their Master was the Truth as well as the Life. They dared not lie.

Here, then, is one essential accordance in the narratives of the Resurrection. They record no appearances of Jesus to enemies or to unbelievers.

2. A second unity of essential principle will be found in the impression produced upon the witnesses.

There was, indeed, a moment of terror at the sepulchre, when they had seen the angel clothed in the long white garment. "They trembled, and were amazed; neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid." So writes St. Mark.[3] And no such word ever formed the close of a Gospel! On the Easter Sunday evening there was another moment when they were "terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit."[4] But this passes away like a shadow. For man, the Risen Jesus turns doubt into faith, faith into joy. For woman, He turns sorrow into joy. From the sacred wounds joy rains over into their souls. "He showed

[1] γυνὴ πάροιστρος, Celsus. "Moments sacrés ou la passion d'une hallucinée donne an monde un Dieu ressuscité." Renan, *Vie de Jesus*, 434.

[2] "Post Resurrectionem . . . Dominus quum dedisset sindonem servo sacerdotis"—Evang. ad Heb.—Matt. xxvii 59.—R. Anger, *Synopsis Evang.*, 288.

[3] Mark xvi. 8.

[4] Luke xxiv. 37.

them His hands and His feet . . . while they yet believed not for joy and wondered." "He showed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."[1] Each face of those who beheld Him wore after that a smile through all tears and forms of death. "Come," cried the great Swedish singer, gazing upon the dead face of a holy friend, "come and see this great sight. Here is a woman who has seen Christ." Many of us know what she meant, for we too have looked upon those dear to us who have seen Christ. Over all the awful stillness—under all the cold whiteness as of snow or marble—that strange soft light, that subdued radiance, what shall we call it? wonder, love, sweetness, pardon, purity, rest, worship, discovery. The poor face often dimmed with tears, tears of penitence, of pain, of sorrow, some perhaps which we caused to flow, is looking upon a great sight. Of such the beautiful text is true, written by a sacred poet in a language of which to many verbs are pictures. "They looked unto Him, and *were lightened*."[2] That meeting of lights without a name it is which makes up what angels call joy. There remained some of that light on all who had seen the Risen Lord. Each might say—"have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?"

This effect, like every effect, had a cause.

Scripture implies in the Risen Jesus a form with all heaviness and suffering lifted off it—with the glory, freshness, elasticity, of the new life, overflowing with beauty and power. He had a voice with some of the pathos of affection, making its sweet concession to human sensibility: saying, "Mary," "Thomas," "Simon, son of

[1] Luke xxiv. 41; John xx. 20. [2] Ps. xxxiv. 15.

Jonas." He had a presence at once so majestic that they durst not question Him, yet so full of magnetic attraction that Magdalene clings to His feet, and Peter flings Himself into the waters when he is sure that it is the Lord.[1]

Now let it be remarked that this consideration entirely disposes of that afterthought of critical ingenuity which has taken the place of the base old Jewish theory—"His disciples came by night, and stole Him away."[2] That theory, indeed, has been blown into space by Christian apologetics. And now not a few are turning to the solution that He did not really die upon the cross, but was taken down alive.

There are other, and more than sufficient refutations. One from the character of the august Sufferer, who would not have deigned to receive adoration upon false pretences. One from the minute observation by St. John of the physiological effect of the thrust of the soldier's lance, to which he also reverts in the context.

But here, we only ask what effect the appearance of the Saviour among His disciples, supposing that He had not died, must unquestionably have had.

He would only have been taken down from the cross something more than thirty hours. His brow punctured with the crown of thorns; the wounds in hands, feet, and side, yet unhealed; the back raw and torn with scourges; the frame cramped by the frightful tension of six long hours—a lacerated and shattered man, awakened to agony by the coolness of the sepulchre and by the pungency of the spices; a spectral, trembling fevered, lamed, skulking thing—could that have seemed the Prince of Life, the Lord of Glory, the Bright and

[1] John xxi. 12, cf. 7.

[2] Matt. xxviii. 13.

Morning Star? Those who had seen Him in Gethsemane and on the cross, and then on Easter, and during the forty days, can scarcely speak of His Resurrection without using language which attains to more than lyrical elevation. Think of St. Peter's anthemlike burst. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Think of the words which St. John heard Him utter. "I am the First and the Living, and behold! I became dead, and I am, living unto the ages of ages."[1]

Let us, then, fix our attention upon the unity of all the Resurrection narratives in these two essential principles. (1) The appearances of the Risen Lord to belief and love only. (2) The impression common to all the narrators of glory on His part, of joy on theirs.

We shall be ready to believe that this was part of the great body of proof which was in the Apostle's mind, when pointing to the Gospel with which this Epistle was associated, he wrote of this human but most convincing testimony—"if we receive," as assuredly we do, "the witness of men"—of evangelists among the number.

II.

Too often such discussions as these end unpractically enough. Too often

> "When the critic has done his best,
> The pearl of price at reason's test
> On the Professor's lecture table
> Lies, dust and ashes levigable."

But, after all, we may well ask: can we afford to dispense with this well-balanced probability? Is it

[1] 1 Pet. i. 3, 4; Apoc. i. 17, 18.

well for us to face life and death without taking it, in some form, into the account?

Now at the present moment, it may safely be said that, for the best and noblest intellects imbued with the modern philosophy, as for the best and noblest of old who were imbued with the ancient philosophy, external to Christian revelation, immortality is still, as before, a fair chance, a beautiful "perhaps," a splendid possibility. Evolutionism is growing and maturing somewhere another Butler, who will write in another, and possibly more satisfying chapter, than that least convincing of any in the *Analogy*—"of a Future State."

What has Darwinism to say on the matter?

Much. Natural selection seems to be a pitiless worker; its instrument is *death*. But, when we broaden our survey, the sum-total of the result is everywhere advance—what is mainly worthy of notice, in man the advance of goodness and virtue. For of goodness, as of freedom,

> "The battle once begun
> Though baffled oft, is always won."

Humanity has had to travel thousands of miles, inch by inch, towards the light. We have made such progress that we can see that in time, relatively short, we shall be in noonday. After long ages of strife, of victory for hard hearts and strong sinews, goodness begins to wipe away the sweat of agony from her brow; and will stand, sweet, smiling, triumphant in the world. A gracious life is free for man; generation after generation a softer ideal stands before us, and we can conceive a day when "the meek shall inherit the earth." Do not say that evolution, if proved *à outrance*, brutalises man. Far from it. It lifts him from below out of the

brute creation. What theology calls original sin, modern philosophy the brute inheritance—the ape, and the goat, and the tiger—is dying out of man. The perfecting of human nature and of human society stands out as the goal of creation. In a sense, all creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. Nor need the true Darwinian necessarily fear materialism. "Livers secrete bile—brains secrete thought," is smart and plausible, but it is shallow. Brain and thought are, no doubt, connected—but the connection is of simultaneousness, of two things in concordance indeed, but not related as cause and effect. If cerebral physiology speaks of annihilation when the brain is destroyed, she speaks ignorantly and without a brief.

The greatest thinkers in the Natural Religion department of the new philosophy seem then to be very much in the same position as those in the same department of the old. For immortality there is a sublime probability. With man, and man's advance in goodness and virtue as the goal of creation, who shall say that the thing so long provided for, the goal of creation, is likely to perish? Annihilation is a hypothesis; immortality is a hypothesis. But immortality is the more likely as well as the more beautiful of the two. We may believe in it, not as a thing demonstrated, but as an act of faith that "God will not put us to permanent intellectual confusion."[1]

But we may well ask whether it is wise and well to refuse to intrench this probability behind another. Is it likely that He who has so much care for us as to make us the goal of a drama a million times more complex than our fathers dreamed of; who lets us see that

[1] See *The Destiny of Man, viewed in the light of his origin*, by John Fiske, especially the three remarkable chapters pp. 96-119.

He has not removed us out of his sight; will leave Himself, and with Himself our hopes, without witness in history? History is especially human; human evidence the branch of moral science of which man is master—for man is the best interpreter of man. The primary axiom of family, of social, of legal, of moral life, is, that there is a kind and degree of human evidence which we ought not to refuse; that if credulity is voracious in belief, incredulity is no less voracious in negation; that if there is a credulity which is simple, there is an incredulity which is unreasonable and perilous. Is it then well to grope for the keys of death in darkness, and turn from the hand that holds them out; to face the ugly realities of the pit with less consolation than is the portion of our inheritance in the faith of Christ?

"The disciples," John tells us, "went away again unto their own home. But Mary was standing without at the sepulchre weeping."[1] Weeping! What else is possible while we are *outside*, while we *stand*—what else until we *stoop* down from our proud grief to the sepulchre, humble our speculative pride, and condescend to gaze at the death of Jesus face to face? When we do so, we forget the hundred voices that tell us that the Resurrection is partly invented, partly imagined, partly ideally true. We may not see angels in white, nor hear their "why weepest thou?" But assuredly we shall hear a sweeter voice, and a stronger than theirs; and our name will be on it, and His name will rush to our lips in the language most expressive to us—as Mary said unto Him in *Hebrew*,[2] Rabboni.

[1] John xx. 10, 11.

[2] The word Ἑβραϊστί had unfortunately dropped out of the T. R. John xx. 16.

Then we shall find that the grey of morning is passing; that the thin thread of scarlet upon the distant hills is deepening into dawn; that in that world where Christ is the dominant law the ruling principle is not natural selection which works through death, but supernatural selection which works through life; that "because He lives, we shall live also."[1]

With the reception of the witness of men then, and among them of such men as the writer of the fourth Gospel, all follows. For Christ,

> "Earth breaks up—time drops away;—
> In flows Heaven with its new day
> Of endless life, when He who trod,
> Very Man and very God,
> This earth in weakness, shame, and pain,
> Dying the death whose signs remain
> Up yonder on the accursed tree;
> Shall come again, no more to be
> Of captivity the thrall—
> But the true God all in all,
> King of kings, and Lord of lords,
> As His servant John received the words—
> 'I died, and live for evermore.'"

For us there comes the hope in Paradise—the connection with the living dead—the pulsation through the isthmus of the Church, from sea to sea, from us to them—the tears not without smiles as we think of the long summer-day when Christ who is our life shall appear—the manifestation of the sons of God, when "them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." Our resurrection shall be a fact of history, because His is a fact of history; and we receive it as such—partly from the reasonable motive of reasonable human belief on sufficient evidence for practical conviction.

All the long chain of manifold witness to Christ is

[1] John xiv. 19.

consummated and crowned when it passes into the inner world of the individual life. "He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in him," *i.e.*, in himself![1] Correlative to this, stands a terrible truth. He of whom we must conceive that he believes not God,[2] has made Him a liar—nothing less; for his time for receiving Christ came, and went, and with this crisis his unbelief stands a completed present act as the result of his past;[3] unbelief stretching over to the completed witness of God concerning His Son;[4]—human unbelief co-extensive with divine witness.

But that sweet witness in a man's self is not merely in books or syllogisms. It is the creed of a living soul. It lies folded within a man's heart, and never dies—part of the great principle of victory[5] fought and won over again in each true life[6]—until the man dies, and ceasing then only because he sees that which is the object of its witness.

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[1] ἐν ἑαυτῷ, ver. 10.

[2] ὁ μὴ πιστεύων τῷ Θεῷ, *Ibid.*

[3] οὐ πεπίστευκεν, *Ibid.*

[4] εἰς τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἣν μεμαρτύρηκεν ὁ Θεὸς περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ. *Ibid.*

[5] πᾶν τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ, νικᾷ τὸν κόσμον, ver. 4.

[6] With the neuter in ver. 4, contrast the individualising masculine in ver. 5, τίς ἐστιν ὁ νικῶν.

DISCOURSE XIV.

SIN UNTO DEATH.

"There is a sin unto death."—1 JOHN v. 17.

THE Church has ever spoken of seven deadly sins. Here is the ugly catalogue. Pride, covetousness, lust, envy, gluttony, hatred, sloth. Many of us pray often "from fornication and all other deadly sin, Good Lord deliver us." This language rightly understood is sound and true; yet, without careful thought, the term may lead us into two errors.

1. On hearing of *deadly* sin we are apt instinctively to oppose it to *venial*. But we cannot define by any *quantitative* test what venial sin may be for any given soul. To do that we must know the complete history of each soul; and the complete genealogy, conception, birth, and autobiography of each sin. Men catch at the term *venial* because they love to minimise a thing so tremendous as sin. The world sides with the casuists whom it satirises; and speaks of a "white lie," of a foible, of an inaccuracy, when "the 'white lie' may be that of St. Peter, the foible that of David, and the inaccuracy that of Ananias!"

2. There is a second mistake into which we often fall in speaking of deadly sin. Our imagination nearly always assumes some one definite outward act; some single individual sin. This may partly be due to a

seemingly slight mistranslation in the text. It should not run "there is *a* sin," but "there is sin unto" (*e.g.*, in the direction of towards) "death."

The text means something deeper and further-reaching than any single sin, deadly though it may be justly called.

The author of the fourth Gospel learned a whole mystic language from the life of Jesus. Death, in the great Master's vocabulary, was more than a single action. It was again wholly different from bodily death by the visitation of God. There are two realms for man's soul co-extensive with the universe and with itself. One which leads towards God is called *Life;* one which leads from Him is called *Death.* There is a radiant passage by which the soul is translated from the death which is death indeed, to the life which is life indeed. There is another passage by which we pass from life to death; *i.e.*, fall back towards *spiritual* (which is not necessarily eternal) death.

There is then a general condition and contexture; there is an atmosphere and position of soul in which the true life flickers, and is on the way to death. One who visited an island on the coast of Scotland has told how he found in a valley open to the spray of the north-west ocean a clump of fir trees. For a time they grew well, until they became high enough to catch the prevalent blast. They were still standing, but had taken a fixed set, and were reddened as if singed by the breath of fire. The island glen might be "swept on starry nights by balms of spring;" the summer sun as it sank might touch the poor stems with a momentary radiance. The trees were still *living*, but only with that cortical vitality which is the tree's death in life. Their doom was evident; they could have but a

few more seasons. If the traveller cared some years hence to visit that islet set in stormy waters, he would find the firs blanched like a skeleton's bones. Nothing remained for them but the sure fall, and the fated rottenness.

The analogy indeed is not complete. The tree in such surroundings *must* die; it can make for itself no new condition of existence; it can hear no sweet question on the breeze that washes through the grove, "why will ye die?" It cannot look upward—as it is scourged by the driving spray, and tormented by the fierce wind—and cry, "O God of my life, give me life." It has no will; it cannot transplant itself. But the human tree can root itself in a happier place. Some divine spring may clothe it with green again. As it was passing from life toward death, so by the grace of God in prayers and sacraments, through penitence and faith, it may pass from death to life.

The Church then is not wrong when she speaks of "deadly sin." The number *seven* is not merely a mystic fancy. But the *seven* "deadly sins" are seven attributes of the whole character; seven master-ideas; seven general conditions of a human soul alienated from God; seven forms of aversion from true life, and of reversion to true death. The style of St. John has often been called "senile;" it certainly has the oracular and sententious quietude of old age in its almost lapidary repose. Yet a terrible light sometimes leaps from its simple and stately lines. Are there not a hundred hearts among us who know that as years pass they are drifting further and further from Him who is the Life? Will they not allow that St. John was right when, looking round the range of the Church, he asserted that there is such a thing as "sin unto death?"

It may be useful to take that one of the seven deadly sins which people are the most surprised to find in the list.

How and why is sloth deadly sin?

There is a distinction between sloth as *vice* and sloth as *sin*. The deadly *sin* of *sloth* often exists where the *vice* has no place. The sleepy music of Thomson's "Castle of Indolence" does not describe the slumber of the spiritual sluggard. Spiritual sloth is want of care and of love for all things in the spiritual order. Its conceptions are shallow and hasty. For it the Church is a department of the civil service; her worship and rites are submitted to, as one submits to a minor surgical operation. Prayer is the waste of a few minutes daily in concession to a sentiment which it might require trouble to eradicate. For the slothful Christian, saints are incorrigibly stupid; martyrs incorrigibly obstinate; clergymen incorrigibly professional; missionaries incorrigibly restless; sisterhoods incorrigibly tender; white lips that can just whisper Jesus incorrigibly awful. For the slothful, God, Christ, death, judgment have no real significance. The Atonement is a plank far away to be clutched by dying fingers in the article of death, that we may gurgle out "yes," when asked "are you happy"? Hell is an ugly word, Heaven a beautiful one which means a sky or an Utopia. Apathy in all spiritual thought, languor in every work of God, fear of injudicious and expensive zeal; secret dislike of those whose fervour puts us to shame, and a miserable adroitness in keeping out of their way; such are the signs of the spirit of sloth. And with this a long series of sins of omission—"slumbering and sleeping while the Bridegroom tarries"—"unprofitable servants."

We have said that the *vice* of sloth is generally distinct from the *sin*. There is, however, one day of the week on which the *sin* is apt to wear the drowsy features of the *vice*—*Sunday*. If there is any day on which we might be supposed to do something towards the spiritual world it must be Sunday. Yet what have any of us done for God on any Sunday? Probably we can scarcely tell. We slept late, we lingered over our dressing, we never thought of Holy Communion; after Church (if we went there) we loitered with friends; we lounged in the Park; we whiled away an hour at lunch; we turned over a novel, with secret dislike of the benevolent arrangements which give the postman some rest. Such have been in the main our past Sundays. Such will be our others, more or fewer, till the arrival of a date written in a calendar which eye hath not seen. The last evening of the closing year is called by an old poet, "the twilight of two years, nor past, nor next." What shall we call the last Sunday of our year of life?

Turn to the first chapter of St. Mark. Think of that day of our Lord's ministry which is recorded more fully than any other. What a day! First that teaching in the Synagogue, when men "were astonished," not at His volubility, but at His "doctrine," drawn from depths of thought. Then the awful meeting with the powers of the world unseen. Next the utterance of the words in the sick room which renovated the fevered frame. Afterwards an interval for the simple festival of home. And then we see the sin, the sorrow, the sufferings crowded at the door. A few hours more, while yet there is but the pale dawn before the meteor sunrise of Syria, He rises from sleep to plunge His wearied brow in the dews of prayer. And finally the

intrusion of others upon that sacred solitude, and the work of preaching, helping, pitying, healing closes in upon Him again with a circle which is of steel, because it is duty—of delight, because it is love. O the divine monotony of one of those golden days of God upon earth! And yet we are offended because He who is the same for ever, sends from heaven that message with its terrible plainness—"because thou art lukewarm, I will spue thee out of my mouth." We are angry that the Church classes sloth as deadly sin, when the Church's Master has said—"thou wicked and *slothful* servant."

DISCOURSE XV.

THE TERRIBLE TRUISM WHICH HAS NO EXCEPTION.

"All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death."—1 JOHN v. 17.

LET us begin by detaching awhile from its context this oracular utterance: "all unrighteousness is sin." Is this true universally, or is it not?

A clear consistent answer is necessary, because a strange form of the doctrine of indulgences (long whispered in the ears) has lately been proclaimed from the housetops, with a considerable measure of apparent acceptance.

Here is the singular dispensation from St. John's rigorous canon to which we refer.

Three such indulgences have been accorded at various times to certain favoured classes or persons. (1) "The moral law does not exist for the elect." This was the doctrine of certain Gnostics in St. John's day; of certain fanatics in every age. (2) "Things absolutely forbidden to the mass of mankind, are allowable for people of commanding rank." Accommodating Prelates, and accommodating Reformers have left the burden of defending these ignoble concessions to future generations. (3) A yet baser dispensation has been freely given by very vulgar casuists. "The chosen of

Fortune"—the men at whose magic touch every stock seems to rise—may be allowed unusual forms of enjoying the unusual success which has crowned their career.

Such are, or such *were*, the dispensations from St. John's canon permitted to themselves, or to others, by the elect of *Heaven*," by the elect of *station*, and by the elect of *fortune*.

Another election hath obtained the perilous exception now—the election of *genius*. Those who endow the world with music, with art, with romance, with poetry, are entitled to the reversion. "All unrighteousness is sin"—except for *them*. (1) The indulgence is no longer valid for those who effect intimacy with heaven (partly perhaps because it is suspected that there is no heaven to be intimate with). (2) The indulgence is not extended to the men who apparently rule over nations, since it has been discovered that nations rule over them. (3) It is not accorded to the constructors of fortunes; they are too many, and too uninteresting, though possibly figures could be conceived almost capable of buying it. But (generally speaking) men of these three classes must pace along the dust of the narrow road by the signpost of the law, if they would escape the censure of society.

For genius alone there is no such inconvenient restriction. Many men, of course, deliberately prefer the "primrose path," but they can no more avoid indignant hisses by the way than they can extinguish the "everlasting bonfire" at the awful close of their journey. With the man of genius it seems that it is otherwise. He shall "walk in the ways of his heart, and in the sight of his eyes;" but, "for all these things" the tribunals of certain schools of a delicate criticism

(delicate criticism can be so indelicate!) will never allow him "to be brought into judgment." Some literary oracles, biographers, or reviewers, are not content to keep a reverential silence, and to murmur a secret prayer. They will drag into light the saddest, the meanest, the most selfish doings of genius. Not the least service to his generation, and to English literature, of the true poet and critic lately taken from us,[1] was the superb scorn, the exquisite wit, with which his indignant purity transfixed such doctrines. A strange winged thing, no doubt, genius sometimes is; alternately beating the abyss with splendid pinions, and eating dust which is the "serpent's meat." But for all that, we cannot see with the critic when he tries to prove that the reptile's crawling is part of the angel's flight; and the dust on which he grovels one with the infinite purity of the azure distances.

The arguments of the apologists for moral eccentricity of genius may be thus summed up:—The man of genius bestows upon humanity gifts which are on a different line from any other. He enriches it on the side where it is poorest; the side of the Ideal. But the very temperament in virtue of which a man is capable of such transcendent work makes him passionate and capricious. To be *imaginative* is to be *exceptional;* and these exceptional beings live for mankind rather than for themselves. When their conduct comes to be discussed, the only question is whether that conduct was adapted to forward the superb self-development which is of such inestimable value to the world. If the gratification of any desire was necessary for that self-development, genius itself being the judge,

[1] Mr. Matthew Arnold.

the cause is ended. In winning that gratification hearts may be broken, souls defiled, lives wrecked. The daintiest songs of the man of genius may rise to the accompaniment of domestic sobs, and the music which he seems to warble at the gates of heaven may be trilled over the white upturned face of one who has died in misery. What matter! Morality is so icy, and so intolerant; its doctrines have the ungentlemanlike rigour of the Athanasian Creed. Genius breaks hearts with such supreme gracefulness, such perfect wit, that they are arrant Philistines who refuse to smile.

We who have the text full in our mind answer all this in the words of the old man of Ephesus. For all that angel-softness which he learned from the heart of Christ, his voice is as strong as it is sweet and calm. Over all the storm of passion, over all the babble of successive sophistries, clear and eternal it rings out—"*all* unrighteousness is sin." To which the apologist, little abashed, replies—"of course we all know *that;* quite true as a general rule, but then men of genius have bought a splendid dispensation by paying a splendid price, and so *their* inconsistencies are not sin."

There are two assumptions at the root of this apology for the aberrations of genius which should be examined. (1) The temperament of men of genius is held to constitute an excuse from which there is no appeal. Such men indeed are sometimes not slow to put forward this plea for themselves. No doubt there are trials peculiar to every temperament. Those of men of genius are probably very great. They are children of the sunshine and of the storm; the grey monotony of ordinary life is distasteful to them. Things which others find it easy to accept convulse their

sensitive organisation. Many can produce their finest works only on condition of being sheltered where no bills shall find their way by the post; where no sound, not even the crowing of cocks, shall break the haunted silence. If the letter comes in one case, and if the cock crows in the other, the first may possibly never be remembered, but the second is never forgotten.

For this, as for every other form of human temperament—that of the dunce, as well as of the genius—allowance must in truth be made. In that one of the lives of the English Poets, where the great moralist has gone nearest to making concessions to this fallacy of temperament, he utters this just warning. "No wise man will easily presume to say, had I been in Savage's condition I should have lived better than Savage." But we must not bring in the temperament of the man of genius as the standard of his conduct, unless we are prepared to admit the same standard in every other case. God is no respecter of persons. For each, conscience is of the same texture, law of the same material. As all have the same cross of infinite mercy, the same judgment of perfect impartiality, so have they the same law of inexorable *duty*.

(2) The necessary *disorder* and *feverishness* of high literary and artistic inspiration is a *second* postulate of the pleas to which I refer. But, is it true that disorder *creates inspiration*; or is a condition of it?

All great work is ordered work; and in producing it the faculties must be exercised harmoniously and with order. True inspiration, therefore, should not be caricatured into a flushed and dishevelled thing. Labour always precedes it. It has been prepared for by education. And that education would have been painful but for the glorious efflorescence of materials

collected and assimilated, which is the compensation for any toil. The very dissatisfaction with its own performances, the result of the lofty ideal which is inseparable from genius, is at once a stimulus and a balm. The man of genius apparently writes, or paints, as the birds sing, or as the spring colours the flowers; but his subject has long possessed his mind, and the inspiration is the child of thought and of ordered labour. Destroying the peace of one's own family or of another's, being flushed with the preoccupation of guilty passion, will not accelerate, but retard the advent of those happy moments which are not without reason called creative. Thus, the inspiration of genius is akin to the inspiration of prophecy. The prophet tutored himself by a fitting education. He became assimilated to the noble things in the future which he foresaw. Isaiah's heart grew royal; his style wore the majesty of a king, before he sang the King of sorrow with His infinite pathos, and the King of righteousness with His infinite glory. Many prophets attuned their spirits by listening to such music as lulls, not inflames passion. Others walked where "beauty born of murmuring sound" might pass into their strain. Think of Ezekiel by the river of Chebar, with the soft sweep of waters in his ear, and their cool breath upon his cheek. Think of St. John with the shaft of light from heaven's opened door upon his upturned brow, and the boom of the Ægean upon the rocks of Patmos around him. "The note of the heathen seer" (said the greatest preacher of the Greek Church) "is to be contorted, constrained, excited, like a maniac; the note of a prophet is to be wakeful, self-possessed, nobly self-conscious." We may apply this test to the distinction

between genius, and the dissipated affectation of genius.

Let us then refuse our assent to a doctrine of indulgences applied to genius on the ground of *temperament* or of literary and artistic *inspiration*. "Why," we are often asked, "why force your narrow judgment upon an angry or a laughing world?" What have you to do with the conduct of gifted men? Genius means exuberant. Why "blame the Niagara River" because it will not assume the pace and manner of "a Dutch canal"? Never indeed should we force that judgment upon any, unless they force it upon us. Let us avoid as far as we may posthumous gossip over the grave of genius. It is an unwholesome curiosity which rewards the blackbird for that bubbling song of ecstasy in the thicket, by gloating upon the ugly worm which he swallows greedily after the shower. The pen or pencil has dropped from the cold fingers. After all its thought and sin, after all its toil and agony, the soul is with its Judge. Let the painter of the lovely picture, the writer of the deathless words, be for us like the priest. The washing of regeneration is no less wrought through the unworthy minister; the precious gift is no less conveyed when a polluted hand has broken the bread and blessed the cup. But if we are forced to speak, let us refuse to accept an *ex post facto* morality invented to excuse a worthless absolution. Especially so when the most sacred of all rights is concerned. It is not enough to say that a man of genius dissents from the received standard of conduct. He cannot make fugitive inclination the only principle of a connection which he promised to recognise as paramount. A passage in the Psalms,[1] has been called "The catechism of Heaven."

[1] See Ps. xv. Cf. Ps. xxiv. 3-7.

"The catechism of Fame" differs from "the catechism of Heaven." "Who shall ascend unto the hill of Fame?" "He that possesses genius." "Who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord?" "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; He that hath sworn to his neighbour and disappointeth him not" (or disappointeth *her* not) "though it were to his own hindrance" —aye, to the hindrance of his self-development. Strange that the rough Hebrew should still have to teach us chivalry as well as religion! In St. John's Epistle we find the two great axioms about sin, in its two essential aspects. "Sin is the transgression of the law:" there is its aspect chiefly *Godward.* "All unrighteousness" (mainly injustice, denial of the rights of others) "is sin:" there is its aspect chiefly *manward.*

Yes, the principle of the text is rigid, inexorable, eternal. Nothing can make its way out of those terrible meshes. It is without favour, without exception. It gives no dispensation, and proclaims no indulgences, to the man of genius, or to any other. If it were otherwise, the righteous God, the Author of creation and redemption, would be dethroned. And *that* is a graver thing than to dethrone even the author of "Queen Mab," and of "The Epipsychidion." Here is the jurisprudence of the "great white Throne" summed up in four words: "*all unrighteousness is sin.*"

So far, in the last discourse, and in this, we have ventured to isolate these two great principles from their context. But this process is always attended with peculiar loss in St. John's writings. And as some may think perhaps that the promise[1] is falsified we must here run the risk of bringing in another thread

[1] 1 John v. 15.

of thought. Yet indeed the whole paragraph[1] has its source in an intense faith in the *efficacy of prayer*, specially as exercised in *intercessory prayer*.

(1) The efficacy of prayer.[2] This is the very sign of contrast with, of opposition to, the modern spirit, which is the negation of *prayer*.

What is the real value of prayer?

Very little, says the modern spirit. Prayer is the stimulant, the Dutch courage of the moral world. Prayer is a power, not because it *is* efficacious, but because it is *believed* to be so.

A modern Rabbi, with nothing of his Judaism left but a rabid antipathy to the Founder of the Church, guided by Spinoza and Kant, has turned fiercely upon the Lord's prayer.[3] He takes those petitions which stand alone among the liturgies of earth in being capable of being translated into every language. He cuts off one pearl after another from the string. Take one specimen. "Our Father which art in Heaven." Heaven! the very name has a breath of magic, a suggestion of beauty, of grandeur, of purity in it. It moves us as nothing else can. We instinctively lift our heads; the brow grows proud of that splendid home, and the eye is wetted with a tear and lighted with a ray, as it looks into those depths of golden sunset which are full for the young of the radiant mystery of life, for the old of the pathetic mystery of death.[4] Yes, but for modern science Heaven means air, or atmosphere, and the address itself is con-

[1] 1 John v. 14, 18.

[2] Vv. 14, 15.

[3] *Historical and Critical Commentary on Leviticus.* By M. M. Kalisch. Part I. Theology of the Past and Future, 431, 438.

[4] This is denied by De Wette (*Ueber die Religion*, Vorlesungen, 106).

tradictory. "Forgive us." But surely the guilt cannot be forgiven, except by the person against whom it is committed. There is no other forgiveness. A mother (whose daughter went out upon the cruel London streets) carried into execution a thought bestowed upon her by the inexhaustible ingenuity of love. The poor woman got her own photograph taken, and a friend managed to have copies of it hung in several halls and haunts of infamy with these words clearly written below—"come home, I forgive you." The tender subtlety of love was successful at last; and the poor haggard outcast's face was touched by her mother's lips. "But the heart of God," says this enemy of prayer, "is not as a woman's heart." (Pardon the words, O loving Father! Thou who hast said "Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Pardon, O pierced Human Love! who hast graven the name of every soul on the palms of Thy hands with the nails of the crucifixion.) Repentance subjectively seems a reality when mother and child meet with a burst of passionate tears, and the polluted brow feels purified by their molten downfall; but repentance *objectively* is seen to be an absurdity by every one who grasps the conception of law. The penitential Psalms may be the *lyrics* of repentance, the Gospel for the third Sunday after Trinity its *idyll*, the cross its *symbol*, the wounds of Christ its *theology* and *inspiration*. But the course of Nature, the hard logic of life is its refutation—the flames that burn, the waves that drown, the machine that crushes, the society that condemns, and that neither can, nor will forgive.

Enough, and more than enough of this. The monster of ignorance who has never learnt a prayer, has hitherto been looked upon as one of the saddest of sights. But

there is something sadder—the monster of over-cultivation, the wreck of schools, the priggish fanatic of godlessness. Alas! for the nature which has become like a plant artificially trained and twisted to turn away from the light. Alas! for the heart which has hardened itself into stone until it cannot beat faster, or soar higher, even when men are saying with happy enthusiasm, or when the organ is lifting upward to the heaven of heavens the cry which is at once the creed of an everlasting dogma and the hymn of a triumphant hope—"with Thee is the well of Life, and in Thy light shall we see light." Now having heard the answer of the modern spirit to the question "what is the real value of prayer?" think of the answer of the spirit of the Church as given by St. John in this paragraph. That answer is not drawn out in a syllogism. St. John appeals to our consciousness of a divine life. "That ye may know that ye have eternal life." This *knowledge* issues in *confidence, i.e.*, literally the sweet possibility of saying out all to God. And this confidence is never disappointed for any believing child of God. "If we know that He hear us, we know that we nave the petitions that we desired of Him."[1]

On the 16th verse we need only say, that the greatness of our brother's spiritual need does not cease to be a title to our sympathy. St. John is not speaking of all requests, but of the fulness of brotherly intercession.

One question and one warning in conclusion; and that question is this. Do we take part in this great ministry of love? Is our voice heard in the full music of the

[1] The form of expression indicates *not* necessarily the very things asked, but the spiritual essence and substance.

prayers of intercession that are ever going up to the Throne, and bringing down the gift of life? Do *we* pray for others?

In one sense all who know true affection and the sweetness of *true* prayer do pray for others. We have never loved with supreme affection any for whom we have not interceded, whose names we have not baptized in the fountain of prayer. Prayer takes up a tablet from the hand of love written over with names; that tablet death itself can only break when the heart has turned Sadducee.

Jesus (we sometimes think) gives one strange proof of the love which yet passeth knowledge. "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus;" "when He had heard therefore" [O that strange therefore!] "that Lazarus was sick, He abode *two days* still in the same place where He was." Ah! sometimes not two days, but two years, and sometimes evermore, He seems to remain. When the income dwindles with the dwindling span of life; when the best beloved must leave us for many years, and carries away our sunshine with him; when the life of a husband is in danger—then we pray; "O Father, for Jesu's sake spare that precious life; enable me to provide for these helpless ones; bless these children in their going out and coming in, and let me see them once again before the night cometh, and my hands are folded for the long rest." Yes, but have we prayed at our Communion "because of that Holy Sacrament in it, and with it," that He would give them the grace which they need—the life which shall save them from sin unto death? Round us, close to us in our homes, there are cold hands, hearts that beat feebly. Let us fulfil St. John's teaching, by praying to Him who is the life that He would chafe those cold hands

with His hand of love, and quicken those dying hearts by contact with that wounded heart which is a heart of fire.

NOTES

Ch. v. 3-17.

Ver. 3. This section should begin with the words "And His commandments are not heavy"—and should not be separated from what follows, because they give one reason of the victory whereof he proceeds to speak. "His commandments are not heavy, for all that is born of God conquereth the world." What a picture of the sweetness of a life of service! What a gentle smile must have been on the old man's face as he said, "His commandments are not grievous!"

Vers. 7, 8. This passage with its apparent obscurity, and famous interpolation, demands some additional notice. As to *criticism* and *interpretation*.

(1) *Critically*. Since the publication of J. J. Griesbach's celebrated work (*Diatribe in locum* 1 John v. 7, 8, Tom. ii., N.T. Halle: 1806), first German, and latterly English, opinion has become absolutely unanimous in agreeing with Griesbach that "the words included between brackets are spurious, and should therefore be eliminated from the Sacred Text." Even the famous Roman Catholic scholar, Scholts, in his great critical edition of the New Testament, in two volumes (Bonn: 1836), boldly dropped the disputed passage from the text. The interpolated passage has certainly no support in any uncial manuscript, or ancient version, or Greek Father of the four first centuries. (2) As to *interpretation*, the faith has lost nothing by the honesty of her wisest defenders. The whole of the genuine passage is intensely Trinitarian. The interpolation is nothing but an exposition written into the text. The three genuine witnesses do really point to the Three Witnesses in Heaven. Bengel's saying expresses the permanent feeling of Christendom, which no criticism can do away with: "This trine array of witnesses on earth is supported by, and has above and beneath it the Trinity, which is Heavenly, archetypal, fundamental, everlasting." The whole context recognizes three special works of the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. "This is the

witness of God," *i.e.* of the Father (ver. 9); "this is He that came by water and blood," *i.e.* the Son (ver. 6); "it is the Spirit that witnesseth," *i.e.* the Holy Ghost (*ibid.*).

A fuller examination of this passage, from a polemical point of view, will be found in the third of the introductory discourses. It will be well, however, to indicate here the immediate controversial reference in the Spirit, the water, and the blood. There is abundant proof that the popular heretical philosophy of Asia Minor struck Christianity precisely in three vital places. It denied—

(1) The Incarnation—consequently

(2) The Redemption—consequently

(3) The Sacraments.

But the mention of the water and the blood in connection with the Person of the Son Incarnate and Crucified established exactly these three points. Narrated as it was by an eye-witness, it established:—

(1) The reality of the Incarnation—consequently

(2) The reality of Redemption—for the blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin (1 John i. 7)—consequently

(3) The reality of Sacraments.

We have articulate evidence of the denial of the two sacraments by the Docetic idealists of Asia Minor. The *Philosophumena* tells us of the view of baptism held by one of their principal sects. "According to them the promise of the laver of regeneration is nothing more than the introduction into the 'unfading pleasure' of him that is washed (as they say) with living water, and anointed with 'chrism that speaketh not.'"[1] The testimony of Ignatius is express as to the other sacrament. "From Eucharist and prayer they abstain on account of not confessing that the Eucharist is flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ which suffered for our sins." —(*Ep. ad Smyrn.* vii.)

[1] Ἡ γὰρ ἐπαγγελία τοῦ λουτροῦ οὐκ ἄλλη τίς ἐστι κατ' αὐτούς, ἢ τὸ εἰσαγαγεῖν εἰς τὴν ἀμάραντον ἡδονὴν τὸν λουόμενον κατ' αὐτοὺς ζῶντι ὕδατι καὶ χριόμενον ἀλάλῳ χρίσματι.—(*Philosoph.*, p. 140, de Naassenis.)

SECTION X.

GREEK.

Οἴδαμεν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει, ἀλλ' ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ τηρεῖ αὐτὸν, καὶ ὁ πονηρὸς οὐχ ἅπτεται αὐτοῦ. οἴδαμεν ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐσμεν, καὶ ὁ κόσμος ὅλος ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται. οἴδαμεν δὲ ὅτι ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἥκει, καὶ δέδωκεν ἡμῖν διανοιαν, ἵνα γινώσκωμεν τὸν ἀληθινόν· καὶ ἐσμὲν ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ, ἐν τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ. οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς Θεὸς καὶ ἡ ζωὴ αἰώνιος. Τεκνία, φυλάξατε ἑαυτοὺς ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων. ἀμήν.

LATIN.

Scimus quoniam omnis qui natus est ex Deo non peccat, sed generatio Dei conservat eum et malignus non tangit eum. Scimus quoniam ex Deo sumus et mundus totus in maligno positus est. Et scimus quoniam Filius Dei venit, et dedit nobis sensum ut cognoscamus verum Deum et simus in vero, Filio eius; hic est verus et vita æterna. Filioli custodite vos a simulachris.

AUTHORISED VERSION.

We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. *And* we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, *even* in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

REVISED VERSION.

We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not; but He that was begotten of God keepeth him, and the evil one toucheth him not. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, *even* in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. *My* little children, guard yourselves from idols.

ANOTHER VERSION.

We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not: but the Begotten of God keepeth him, and the evil one toucheth him not.

We know that we are from God and the world lieth wholly in the evil one.

We know moreover that the Son of God hath *come and* is here, and hath given us understanding that we know Him that is the Very God: and in His Son Jesus Christ (this is the Very God and eternal life), we are in the Very (*God*). Children, guard yourselves from the idols.

NOTES.

Ch. v. 18-21.

Ver. 18, 19, 20. Three seals are affixed to the close of this Epistle—three postulates of the spiritual reason; three primary canons of spiritual perception and knowledge. Each is marked by the emphatic "we know," which is stamped at the opening of its first line. The first "we know," is of a sense of purity made possible to the Christian through the keeping by Him Who is the one Begotten of God. The evil one cannot touch him with the contaminating touch which implies connection. The second "we know" involves a sense of *privilege;* the true conviction that by God's power, and love, we are brought into a sphere of light, out of the darkness in which a sinful world has become as if cradled on the lap of the evil one. The third "we know" is the deep consciousness of the very Presence of the Son of God in and with His Church. And with this comes all the inner life—supremely a new way of looking at things, a new possibility of thought, a new cast of thought and sentiment, "understanding" (διάνοια). Words denoting intellectual faculties and processes are rare in St. John. This word is used in the sense just given in Plat., *Rep.*, 511, and Arist., *Poet.*, vi. (in the last, however, rather of the *sentiment* of the piece than of the author), "He hath given us understanding that we know continuously the very [God]." And in "His Son Jesus Christ [this is the very God and eternal life] we are in the very God." This interpretation of the passage is supported by the position of the pronoun which cannot be referred naturally to any subject but Jesus Christ. Waterland quotes Irenæus. "No man can know God unless God has taught him; that is to say, that without God, God cannot be known."[1]

Ver. 21. The Epistle closes with a short, sternly affectionate exhortation. "Children, guard yourselves" (the aorist imperative of immediate final decision) "from the idols." These words are natural in the atmosphere of Ephesus (Acts xix. 26, 27). The Author of the Apocalypse has a like hatred of idols. (Apoc. ii. 14, 15, ix. 20, xx. 1-8, xxii. 15.)

[1] Moyer Lecture, vi.

It would appear that the Gnostics allowed people to eat freely things sacrificed to idols. Modern, like ancient unbelief, has sometimes attributed to St. John a determination to exalt the Master whom he knew to be a man to an equality with God. But this is morally inconsistent with the Apostle's unaffected shrinking from idolatry in every form. (See *Speaker's Commentary, N. T.*, iv., 347).

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF ST. JOHN.

II. EPISTLE.

GREEK.

Ὁ πρεσβύτερος ἐκλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ καὶ τοῖς τέκνοις αὐτῆς, οὓς ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ, καὶ οὐκ ἐγὼ μόνος ἀλλὰ καὶ πάντες οἱ ἐγνωκότες τὴν ἀλήθειαν, διὰ τὴν ἀλήθειαν τὴν μένουσαν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ μεθ' ἡμῶν ἔσται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. ἔσται μεθ' ἡμῶν χάρις, ἔλεος, εἰρήνη, παρὰ Θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ παρὰ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς, ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἀγάπῃ. Ἐχάρην λίαν ὅτι εὗρηκα ἐκ τῶν τέκνων σου περιπατοῦντας ἐν ἀληθείᾳ, καθὼς ἐντολὴν ἐλάβομεν παρὰ τοῦ πατρός. καὶ νῦν ἐρωτῶ σε, κυρία, οὐχ ὡς ἐντολὴν γράφων σοι καινὴν, ἀλλὰ ἣν εἴχομεν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους. καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη, ἵνα περιπατῶμεν κατὰ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ. αὕτη

LATIN.

Senior electæ dominæ et natis eius, quos ego diligo in veritate, et non ego solus sed et omnes qui cognoverunt veritatem, propter veritatem quæ permanet in nobis et nobis cum erit in æternum. Sit nobiscum gratia misericordia pax a Deo Patre et Christo Iesu Filio Patris in veritate et caritate. Gavisus sum valde quoniam inveni de filii tuis ambulantes in veritate sicut mandatum accepimus a Patre. Et nunc rogo te, domina, non tamquam mandatum novum scribens tibi, sed quod habuimus ab initio, ut diligamus alterutrum. Et hæc est caritas, ut ambulemus secundum mandata eius. Hoc mandatum est ut quem-

AUTHORISED VERSION.

The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever. Grace be with you, mercy, *and* peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father. And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love

REVISED VERSION.

The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not I only, but also all they that know the truth; for the truth's sake which abideth in us, and it shall be with us for ever: Grace, mercy, peace shall be with us, from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. I rejoice greatly that I have found certain of thy children walking in truth, even as we received commandment from the Father. And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote to thee a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one

ANOTHER VERSION.

The Elder unto the excellent Kyria and her children whom I love in truth, (and not I only, but also all they that know the truth) for the truth's sake which abideth in us—yea, and with us it shall be for ever. There shall be with you grace, mercy, peace from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ the Son of the Father, in truth and love. I was exceeding glad that I found of thy children walking in truth even as we received commandment from the Father. And now I beseech thee Kyria, not as though writing a fresh commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning,

ἐστὶν ἡ ἐντολή, καθὼς ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῇ περιπατῆτε· ὅτι πολλοὶ πλάνοι εἰσῆλθον εἰς τὸν κόσμον, οἱ μὴ ὁμολογοῦντες Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐρχόμενον ἐν σαρκί· οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ πλάνος καὶ ὁ ἀντίχριστος· βλέπετε ἑαυτούς, ἵνα μὴ ἀπολέσωμεν ἃ εἰργασάμεθα, ἀλλὰ μισθὸν πλήρη ἀπολάβωμεν. πᾶς ὁ παραβαίνων καὶ μὴ μένων ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ Θεὸν οὐκ ἔχει· ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ οὗτος καὶ τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱὸν ἔχει. εἴ τις ἔρχεται πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ ταύτην τὴν διδαχὴν οὐ φέρει, μὴ λαμβάνετε αὐτὸν εἰς οἰκίαν, καὶ χαίρειν αὐτῷ μὴ λέγετε· ὁ γὰρ λέγων αὐτῷ χαίρειν κοινωνεῖ τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ τοῖς πονηροῖς. Πολλὰ ἔχων ὑμῖν γράφειν οὐκ ἠβουλήθην διὰ χάρτου καὶ μέλανος· ἀλλὰ ἐλπίζω ἐλθεῖν πρὸς

admodum audistis ab initio in eo ambuletis. Quoniam multi seductores exierunt in mundum qui non confitentur Iesum Christum venientem in carne. Hic est seductor et antichristus. Videte vosmet ipsos, ne perdatis quæ operati estis, sed ut mercedam plenum accipiatis. Omnis qui præcedit et non manet in doctrina Christi, Deum non habet: qui permanet in doctrina, hic et Filium et Patrem habet. Si quis venit ad vos, et hanc doctrinam non adfert, nolite recipere eum in domum nec ave ei dixeritis: qui enim dicit illi ave, communicat operibus illius malignis. Plura habens vobis scribere, nolui per cartam et atramentum: spero enim me futurum apud vos et os ad os loqui, ut

one another. And this is love, that we walk after His commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it. For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house,

another. And this is love, that we should walk after His commandments. This is the commandment, even as ye heard from the beginning, that ye should walk in it. For many deceivers are gone forth into the world, even that they confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. Look to yourselves, that ye lose not the things which we have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward. Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive

that we love one another. And this is the love, that we should walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment as ye heard from the beginning that ye should walk in it. For many deceivers are gone out into the world, *even* they who are not confessing Jesus Christ coming in the flesh. This the deceiver, and the antichrist. Look to yourselves that ye lose not the things which ye have worked, but that ye receive reward in full. Every one leading forward and not abiding in the doctrine which is Christ's hath not God: he that abideth in the doctrine, the same hath both the Son and the Father. If there come unto you any and bringeth not this doc-

ὑμᾶς καὶ στόμα πρὸς στόμα λαλῆσαι, ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν ᾖ πεπληρωμένη. Ἀσπάζεταί σε τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἀδελφῆς σου τῆς ἐκλεκτῆς. ἀμήν.

gaudium vestrum sit plenum. Salutant te filii sororis tuæ electæ.

neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. Having many things to write unto you, I would not *write* with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.

him not into *your* house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works. Having many things to write unto you, I would not *write them* with paper and ink: but I hope to come unto you, and to speak face to face, that your joy may be fulfilled. The children of thine elect sister salute thee.

trine, receive him not into your house, and no good speed wish him. For he that wisheth him good speed partaketh in his works which are evil. Having many things to write unto you I would not write with paper and ink, but I hope to be with you and to speak face to face, that our joy may be fulfilled. The children of thine elect sister greet thee.

DISCOURSE XVI.

THEOLOGY AND LIFE IN KYRIA'S LETTER.

"The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth . . . Grace be with you, mercy and peace, from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love."—2 JOHN, 3.

OF old God addressed men in tones that, were so to speak, distant. Sometimes He spoke with the stern precision of law or ritual; sometimes in the dark and lofty utterances of prophets; sometimes through the subtle voices of history, which lend themselves to different interpretations. But in the New Testament He whom no man hath seen at any time, "interpreted,"[1] Himself with a sweet familiarity. It is of a piece with the dispensation of condescendence, that the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven should come to us in such large measure through epistles. For a letter is just the result of taking up one's pen to converse with one who is absent, a familiar talk with a friend.

Of the epistles in our New Testament, a few are addressed to *individuals*. The effect of three of these letters upon the Church, and even upon the world, has been great. The Epistles to Timothy and Titus, according to the most prevalent interpretation of them, have been felt in the outward organization of the Church. The Epistle to Philemon, with its eager

[1] John i. 18.

tenderness, its softness as of a woman's heart, its chivalrous courtesy, has told in another direction. With all its freedom from the rashness of social revolution; its almost painful abstinence (as abolitionists have sometimes confessed to feeling) from actual invective against slavery in the abstract; that letter is yet pervaded by thoughts whose issue can only be worked out by the liberty of the slave. The word emancipation may not be pronounced, but it hovers upon the Apostle's lips.

The second Epistle is, in our judgment, a letter to an individual. Certainly we are unable to find in its whole contents any probable allusion to a Church personified as a lady.[1] It is, as we read it, addressed to Kyria, an Ephesian lady, or one who lived in the circle of Ephesian influence. It was sent by the Apostle during an absence from Ephesus. That absence might have been for the purpose of one of the visitations of the Churches of Asia Minor, which (as we are told by ancient Church writers) the Apostle was in the habit of holding. Possibly, however, in the case of a writer so brief and so reserved in the expression of personal sentiment as St. John, the gush and sunshine of anticipated joy at the close of this note might tempt us to think of a rift

[1] There is no doubt a large amount of authority for this view that St. John addresses a Church personified. It has the support of sacred critics so different as Bishop Wordsworth and Bishop Lightfoot. (*Ep. to Colossians and Philemon*, 305), and Professor Westcott seems (with some hesitation) to lean to it. But there is also a great body of support, ancient and modern, for the literal view. (Clem. Alex., *Adunbr. ad ii. Joan.*, *Op.*, iii. 1011.) So Athanasius, or the author of "Synopsis S.S." in Athanasius, *Opp.*, iv. 410. See also the heading of the A. V. ("He exhorteth a certain honourable matron, with her children.") For reasons for accepting Kyria rather than Electa as the name, see *Speaker's Commentary*, iv. 335.

in some sky that had been long darkened; of the close of some protracted separation, soon to be forgotten in a happy meeting. "Having many things to write unto you, I would not do so by means of paper and ink; but I hope to come unto you, and to speak face to face that our joy may be fulfilled."[1] The expression might not seem unsuitable for a return from exile. Several touches of language and feeling in the latter point to the conclusion that Kyria was a widow. There is no mention of her husband, the father of her children. In the case of a writer who uses the names of God with such subtle and tender suitability, the association of Kyria's "children walking in truth" with "even as we received commandment *from the Father*," may well point to Him who was for them the Father of the fatherless. We need not with some expositors draw the sad conclusion that St. John affectionately hints that there were others of the family who could not be included in this joyful message. But it would seem highly probable from the language used that there were several sons, and also that Kyria had no daughters. Over these sons who had lost one earthly parent, the Apostle rejoices with the heart of a father in God. He bursts out with his *eureka*, the *eureka* not of a philosopher, but of a saint. "I rejoiced exceedingly that I found[2] certain of the number of thy children walking in truth."

While we may not trace in this little Epistle the same fountain of wide-spreading influence as in others to which we have referred; while we feel that, like its author, its work is deep and silent rather than commanding, reflection will also lead us to the conclusion

[1] Ver. 12. [2] εὕρηκα, ver. 4.

that it is worthy of the Apostle who was looked upon as one of the "pillars" of the faith.[1]

1. Let us reflect that this letter is addressed by the aged Apostle to a widow, and concerns her family.

It is significant that Kyria was, in all probability, a widow of Ephesus.

Toc many of us have more or less acquaintance with one department of French literature. A Parisian widow is too often the questionable heroine of some shameful romance, to have read which is enough to taint the virginity of the young imagination. Ephesus was the Paris of Ionia. Petronius was the Daudet or Zola of his day. An Ephesian widow is the heroine of one of the most cynically corrupt of his stories.

But "where sin abounded, grace did more than abound." Strange that first in an epistle to a Bishop of the Church of Ephesus, St. Paul should have presented us with that picture of a Christian widow—"she that is a widow, indeed, and desolate, who hath her hope set on God, and continueth in prayer night and day"—yet who, if she has the devotion, the almost entire absorption in God, of Anna, the daughter of Phanuel,[2] leaves upon the track of her daily road to heaven the trophies of Dorcas—"having brought up children well, used hospitality to strangers, washed the saints' feet, relieved the afflicted, diligently followed every good work."[3] Such widows are the leaders of the long procession of women, veiled or unveiled, with vows or without them, who have ministered to Jesus through the ages. Christ has a beautiful art of turning the affliction of His daughters into the consolation

[1] "James, Cephas, and JOHN, who seemed to be *pillars*." Gal. ii. 9.
[2] Luke ii. 36.
[3] 1 Tim. v. 3, 5, 10.

of suffering. When life's fairest hopes are disappointed by falsehood, by cruel circumstances, by death; the broken heart is soothed by the love of Christ, the only love which is proof against death and change. The consolation thus received is the most unselfish of gifts. It overflows, and is lavishly poured out upon the sick and weary. With St. Paul's picture of a widow of this kind, contrast another by the same hand which hangs close beside it. The younger Ephesian widow, such as Petronius described, was known by St. Paul also. If any count the Apostle as a fanatic, destitute of all knowledge of the world because he lived above it, let them look at those lines, which are full of such caustic power, as they hit off the characteristics of certain idle and wanton affecters of a sorrow which they never felt.[1] What a distance between such widows and Kyria, "beloved for the truth's sake which abideth in us!"[2]

But the short letter of St. John is addressed to Kyria's *family* as well as to herself. "The elder to the excellent Kyria and her children."[3]

There is one question which we naturally ask about every school and form of religion. It is the question which a great English Professor of Divinity used to ask his pupils to put in a homely form about every religious scheme and mode of utterance—"will it *wash* well?" Is it an influence which seems to be productive and lasting? Does it abide through time and trials? Is it capable of being passed on to another generation? Are plans, services, organizations, preachings, classes, vital or showy? Are they fads to meet fancies, or works to supply wants? Is that which we hold such sober, solid truth, that wise piety can say

[1] 1 Tim. v. 6-11, 12, 13. [2] 2 John 2. [3] Ver. 1.

of it, half in benediction, half in prophecy[1]—"the truth which abideth in us; yea, and with us it shall be for ever?"

2. We turn to the *contents* of the Epistle.

We shall be better able to appreciate the value of these, if we consider the state of Christian literature at that time.

What had Christians to read and carry about with them? The excellent work of the Bible Society was physically impossible for long centuries to come. No doubt the LXX. version of the Old Testament was widely spread. In every great city of the Roman Empire there was a vast population of Jews. Many of these were baptized into the Church, and carried into it with them their passionate belief in the Old Testament. The Christians of the time and place to which we refer could, probably, with little trouble, if not read, yet hear the Old Covenant and able expositions of it. But they had not copies of the entire New Testament. Indeed, if all the New Testament was then written, it certainly was not collected into one volume, nor constituted one supreme authority. "Many barbarous nations," says a very ancient Father, "believe in Christ without written record, having salvation impressed through the Spirit in their hearts, and diligently preserving the old tradition."[2] Possibly a Church or single believer had one synoptical Gospel. At Ephesus Christians had doubtless been catechised in, and were deeply imbued with, St. John's view of the Person, work, and teaching of our Lord. This had now been moulded into shape, and definitely committed to writing in that

[1] διὰ τὴν ἀλήθειαν τὴν μένουσαν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ μεθ' ἡμῶν ἔσται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. 2 John ver. 2.

[2] Irenæus, *Hær.* iii. 4

glorious Gospel, the Church's Holy of Holies, St. John's Gospel. For them and for their contemporaries there was a living realization of the Gospel. They had heard it from eye-witnesses. They had passed into the wonderland of God. The earth on which Jesus trod had blossomed into miracle. The air was haunted by the echoes of His voice. They had, probably, also a certain number of the Epistles of St. Paul. The Christians of Ephesus would have a special interest in their own Epistle to the Ephesians, and in the two which were written to their first Bishop, Timothy They had also (whether written or not) impressed upon their memories by their weekly Eucharist, the liturgical Canon of consecration according to the *Ephesian usage*—from which, and not the Roman, the Spanish and Gallican seem to be derived. The Ephesian Christians had also the first Epistle of St. John, which in some form accompanied the Gospel, and is, indeed, a picture of spiritual life drawn from it. But let us remember that the Epistle is not of a character to be very quickly or readily learned by heart. Its subtle, latent links of connection do not present many grappling hooks for the memory to fasten itself to. Copies also must have been comparatively few.

Now let us see how the second Epistle may well have been related to the first.

Supremely, and above all else, the first Epistle contained *three* warnings, very necessary for those times. (1) There was a danger of *losing the true Christ*, the Word made Flesh, Who for the forgiveness of our sins did shed out of His most precious side both water and blood—in a false, because shadowy and ideal Christ. (2) There was danger of *losing true love*, and therefore spiritual life, with truth. (3) With the true Christ and

true love there was a danger of losing *the true commandment*—love of God and of the brethren. Now in the second Epistle these very three warnings were written on a leaflet in a form more calculated for circulation and for remembrance. (1) Against the peril of faith, of *losing the true Christ.* "Many deceivers are gone out into the world—they who confess not Jesus Christ coming in flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist."[1] With the true Christ, the true doctrine of Christ would also vanish, and with it all living hold upon *God. Progress* was the watchword; but it was in reality *regress.* "Every one who abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God."[2] (2) Against the peril of *losing love.* "I beseech thee, Kyria . . . that we love one another."[3] (3) Against the peril of losing *the true commandment* (the great spiritual principle of charity), or the true commandments[4] (that principle in the details of life). "And this is love, that we walk after His *commandments.* This is the *commandment,* that even as ye heard from the beginning ye should walk in it."[5]

Here then were the chief practical elements of the first Epistle contracted into a brief and easily remembered shape.

Easily remembered, too, was the stern, practical prohibition of the intimacies of hospitality with those who came to the home of the Christian, in the capacity of emissaries of the antichrist above indicated. "Re-

[1] Ver. 7. [2] Ver. 9. [3] Ver. 5.

[4] *Commandments* and *commandment*—Love strives to realise in detail every separate expression of the will of God." (Prof. Westcott, *Epistles of St. John,* 217).

[5] Ver. 6.

ceive him not into your house, and good speed salute him not with."[1]

Many are offended with this. No doubt Christianity is the religion of love—"the epiphany of the sweet-naturedness and philanthropy of God."[2] We very often look upon heresy or unbelief with the tolerance of curiosity rather than of love. At all events, the Gospel has its intolerance as well as tolerance. St. John certainly had this. It is not a true conception in art which invests him with the mawkish sweetness of perpetual youth. There is a sense in which he was a son of Thunder to the last. He who believes and knows must formulate a dogma. A dogma frozen by formality, or soured by hate, or narrowed by stupidity, makes a bigot. In reading the Church History of the first four centuries we are often tempted to ask, why all this subtlety, this theology-spinning, this dogma-hammering? The answer stands out clear above the mists of controversy. Without all this the Church would have lost the conception of Christ, and thus finally Christ Himself. St. John's denunciations have had a function in Christendom as well as his love.

[1] It is, probably, the existence of these verses (vv. 10, 11) which acts as a stimulus to many liberal Christian commentators in favour of the ultra-mystical view, that the lady addressed in this Epistle is a Church personified. It should be carefully noted that St. John speaks of a *formal* summons, so to speak, from an emissary of anti-christ as such. (*εἴ τις ἔρχεται πρὸς ὑμᾶς*, ver. 10). St. John, also, must have detected a danger in the very gentleness of Kyria's character, or in the disposition of some of her children. So much, indeed, might seem implied in the sudden, solemn, and rather startling warning, which entreated constant continuous care (*βλέπετε ἑαυτούς*), so that they should not in some momentary impulse, under the charm of some deceiver, lose what they had wrought, and with it reward in fulness (*ἵνα μὴ ἀπολέσητε*, ver. 10).

[2] Titus iii. 4.

3. There are two most precious indications of the highest Christian truth with which we may conclude.

We have prefixed to this Epistle that beautiful Apostolic salutation which is found in two only among the Epistles of St. Paul.[1] After that simple, but exquisite expression of blessing merged in prophecy—"the truth which abideth in us—yes! and with us it shall be for ever"—there comes another verse set in the same key. "There shall be with us grace, mercy, peace, from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ the Son of the Father, in truth" of thought, "and love" of life.[2]

This rush and reduplication of words is not very like the usual reserve and absence of emotional excitement in St. John's style. Can it be that something (possibly the glorious death of martyrdom by which Timothy died) led St. John to use words which were probably familiar to Ephesian Christians?

However this may be, let us live by and learn from those lovely words. Our poverty wants *grace*, our guilt wants *mercy*, our misery wants *peace*. Let us ever keep the Apostle's order. Do not let us put *peace*, our feeling of peace, first. The emotionalists' is a topsy-turvy theology. Apostles do not say "peace and grace," but "grace and peace."

One more—in an age which substitutes an ideal something called the spirit of Christianity for Christ, let us hold fast to that which is the essence of the Gospel and the kernel of our three creeds. "To confess Jesus Christ coming in flesh."[3] Couple with this a canon of the First Epistle—"confesseth Jesus Christ

[1] 1 Tim. i. 1; 2 Tim. i. 2.
[2] Ἔσται μεθ' ὑμῶν χάρις, ἔλεος, εἰρήνη, κ.τ.λ. 2 John ver. 3.
[3] Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐρχόμενον ἐν σαρκί. 2 John ver. 7.

come in flesh."[1] The second is the Incarnation *fact* with its abiding consequences; the first, the Incarnation *principle* ever living in a Person, Who will also be personally manifested. This is the substance of the Gospels; this the life of prayers and sacraments; this the expectation of the saints.

NOTES.

Ver. 1. *The Elder.*] This word has played a great part in an important controversy. It is argued that the Elder of this and of the Third Epistle is the author indeed of the first Epistle and of the Gospel, but cannot be the Apostle St. John, who would not, (it is alleged,) call himself ὁ πρεσβύτερος. And Eusebius (*H.E.*, lib. iii., cap. ult.) preserves a fragment from Papias, which he misunderstands to indicate that there were two Johns (see Riggenbach, *Leben Jesu*, 59, 60). But even if the word be Presbyter, and points to an ecclesiastical title, it might stand precisely on the same footing as St. Peter's language—"the elders among you I exhort, who am a *fellow elder*" (1 Pet. v. 1). The Elder at the opening of the Second and Third Epistles of St. John, may well signify the aged Apostle, the oldest of the company of Jesus, the one living representative of the traditions of Galilee and Jerusalem.

Ver. 7. *The seducer.*] ὁ πλάνος. The almost technical force of this word would be adequately appreciated only by readers more or less imbued with Jewish ideas. It was indeed the really strong motive in the terrible game which the Jewish priests played in bringing about the death of our Lord. The process against the *Mesith*, "seducer," is drawn out in the Talmud with an effrontery at once puerile and revolting. The man accused of *seduction* was to be drawn into conversation while two witnesses were hidden in the next room,—and candles were to be lighted, as if accidentally, close by him, that the witnesses might be sure that they had seen, as well as heard the heretic. He was to be called upon to retract his heretical pravity. If he refused, he was to be brought before the Council, and stoned if the verdict was against him. The

[1] Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα. 1 John iv. 2.

Talmudists add that this was the legal process carried out against Jesus: that He was condemned upon the testimony of two witnesses; and that the crime of "misleading" was the only one which was thus formally dealt with. (See references to the Talmud of Jerusalem, and that of Babylon, *Vie de Jesus*, Renan, 394, N. 1). The Gospels tell us that the accusation against our Lord was "misleading:" and the terrible word in the verse which we are examining was actually applied to Him, (ἐκεῖνος ὁ πλάνος, Matt. xxvii. 63; πλανᾷ τὸν ὄχλον, John vii. 12; μὴ καὶ ὑμεῖς πεπλάνησθε; John vii. 47).

"Excepting some minutiæ, the product of the Rabbinical imagination, the narrative of the Evangelists answers, point by point, to the process actually laid down by the Talmud" (Renan, ut sup.).

Ver. 9. *Every one who leadeth forward.*] πᾶς ὁ προάγων is certainly the true reading here; the commander himself pushing boldly onward, and also carrying others with him. The allusion is polemical to the vaunted *progress* of the Gnostic teachers.

"*The doctrine which is Christ's.*"] What is that? John vii. 16, 17. The doctrine which Christ emphatically called "*My doctrine*," "*the doctrine*." No doubt the word (διδαχή) sometimes means the *act*, sometimes the *mode, of teaching* (Mark xii. 38; 1 Cor. xiv. 6); but "it underwent a transformation which converted it into a term synonymous with dogmatic teaching," with the body of faithful doctrine which was the ultimate type and norm to which all statements must be conformed. (Tit. i. 9; Rom. vi., xvi. 17; see also Matt. xvi. 12; Acts v. 28, xvii. 19; Heb. xiii. 2.) It is much to be regretted that in the R.V. the word "doctrine" has disappeared from all these passages, Romans xvi. 17 alone excepted. St. John's language in this verse seems quite decisive.

THE THIRD EPISTLE OF ST JOHN

III. EPISTLE.

GREEK.

Ὁ πρεσβύτερος Γαΐῳ τῷ ἀγαπητῷ, ὃν ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ. Ἀγαπητέ, περὶ πάντων εὔχομαί σε εὐοδοῦσθαι καὶ ὑγιαίνειν, καθὼς εὐοδοῦταί σου ἡ ψυχή. ἐχάρην γὰρ λίαν ἐρχομένων ἀδελφῶν καὶ μαρτυρούντων σου τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, καθὼς σὺ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ περιπατεῖς. μειζοτέραν τούτων οὐκ ἔχω χαράν, ἵνα ἀκούω τὰ ἐμὰ τέκνα ἐν ἀληθείᾳ περιπατοῦντα. Ἀγαπητέ, πιστὸν ποιεῖς ὃ ἐὰν ἐργάσῃ εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ εἰς τοὺς ξένους, οἳ ἐμαρτύρησάν σου τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐνώπιον ἐκκλησίας, οὓς καλῶς ποιήσεις προπέμψας ἀξίως τοῦ Θεοῦ. ὑπὲρ γὰρ τοῦ ὀνόματος ἐξῆλθον μηδὲν λαμβάνοντες ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνῶν. ἡμεῖς οὖν ὀφείλομεν

LATIN.

Senior Gaio carissimo, quem ego diligo in veritate. Carissime, de omnibus orationem facio prosper te ingredi et valere, sicut prospere agit anima tua. Gavisus sum valde venientibus fratribus et testimonium perhibentibus veritati tuæ, sicut te in veritate ambulas. Maiorem horum non habeo gratiam quam ut audiam filios meos in veritate ambulantes. Carissime, fideliter facias quidquid operaris in fratres, et hoc in peregrinos; qui testimonium reddiderunt caritati tuæ in conspectu ecclesiæ; quos bene facies ducens digna Deo. Pro nomine enim profecti sunt nihil accipientes a gentibus. Nos ergo debemus sus-

AUTHORISED VERSION.

The elder unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth. Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:

REVISED VERSION.

The elder unto Gaius the beloved, whom I love in truth. Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. For I rejoiced greatly, when brethren came and bare witness unto thy truth, even as thou walkest in truth. Greater joy have I none than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth. Beloved, thou doest a faithful work in whatsoever thou doest toward them that are brethren and strangers withal; who bare witness to thy love before the church: whom thou wilt do well to set forward on their journey worthily of God: because that for the sake of the

ANOTHER VERSION.

The Elder unto Gaius the beloved, whom I love in truth. Beloved, in all things I pray that thou mayest prosper, and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. For I was exceeding glad of brethren coming and witnessing to thy truth, even as thou truly walkest. Greater joy than these *joys* I have not, that I should hear of my own children walking truly. Beloved, thou doest in faithful wise whatsoever thou art working towards the brethren who are moreover strangers; which witness to thy charity before the Church; whom thou wilt do well to speed forward on their journey worthily of God: because

ἀπολαμβάνειν τοὺς τοιούτους, ἵνα συνεργοὶ γινώμεθα τῇ ἀληθείᾳ. Ἔγραψα τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ· ἀλλ' ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν Διοτρεφὴς οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς. διὰ τοῦτο, ἐὰν ἔλθω, ὑπομνήσω αὐτοῦ τὰ ἔργα ἃ ποιεῖ λόγοις πονηροῖς φλυαρῶν ἡμᾶς, καὶ μὴ ἀρκούμενος ἐπὶ τούτοις οὔτε αὐτὸς ἐπιδέχεται τοὺς ἀδελφούς, καὶ τοὺς βουλομένους κωλύει καὶ ἐκ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐκβάλλει. Ἀγαπητέ, μὴ μιμοῦ τὸ κακόν, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀγαθόν. ὁ ἀγαθοποιῶν ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστιν· ὁ δὲ κακοποιῶν οὐχ ἑώρακεν τὸν Θεόν. Δημητρίῳ μεμαρτύρηται ὑπὸ πάντων καὶ ὑπ' αὐτῆς τῆς ἀληθείας· καὶ ἡμεῖς δὲ μαρτυροῦμεν, καὶ οἶδατε ὅτι ἡ μαρτυρία ἡμῶν ἀληθής ἐστι. Πολλὰ εἶχον γράφειν, ἀλλ' οὐ θέλω διὰ μέλανος καὶ καλάμου σοι

cipare huiusmodi ut cooperatores simus veritatis. Scripsissem sitan ecclesiæ: sedis qui amat primatum gerere in eis Diotripes non recipit nos. Propter hoc, si venero, commoneam eius opera quæ facit verbis malignis garriens in nos, et quasi non ei ista sufficiant, nec ipse suscipit fratres, et eos quo cupiunt prohibet et de ecclesia eicit. Carissime, noli imitari malum, sed quod bonum est. Qui bene facit, ex Deo est: qui male facit, non videt Deum. Demetris testimonium redditur ab omnibus et ab ipsa veritate: et nos testimonium perhibemus, et nosti quoniam testimonium nostrum verum est. Multa habui scribere tibi, sed nolui per atramentum et calamum scribere tibi:

because that for His name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth. I wrote unto the Church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth *them* out of the church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God. Demetrius hath good

Name they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to welcome such, that we may be fellow-workers with the truth. I wrote somewhat unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Therefore, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he doeth, prating against us with wicked words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and them that would he forbiddeth, and casteth *them* out of the church. Beloved, imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: he that doeth evil hath not seen God. Demetrius hath the

that for the sake of the Name they went out taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore are bound to take up such that we may become fellow-workers with the truth. I wrote somewhat unto the Church: but Diotrephes who loveth to have primacy over them receiveth us not. Wherefore if I come I will bring to remembrance his works which he is doing, prating against us with wicked words: and not contented hereupon neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and them that would he hindereth, and casteth them out of the Church. Beloved, imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good. He who is doing good is from God; he that is doing evil hath not

γράψαι· ἐλπίζω δὲ εὐθέως ἰδεῖν σε, καὶ στόμα πρὸς στόμα λαλήσομεν. Εἰρήνη σοι. Ἀσπάζονταί σε οἱ φίλοι· ἀσπάζου τοὺς φίλους κατ' ὄνομα.

spero autem protinus te videre, et os ad os loquimur. Pax tibi. Salutant te amici. Saluta amicos per nomen.

report of all *men*, and of the truth itself: yea, and we *also* bear record; and ye know that our record is true. I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: but I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace *be* to thee. *Our* friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

witness of all *men*, and of the truth itself: yea, we also bear witness; and thou knowest that our witness is true. I had many things to write unto thee, but I am unwilling to write *them* to thee with ink and pen: but I hope shortly to see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace *be* unto thee. The friends salute thee. Salute the friends by name.

seen God. To Demetrius witness stands given of all men and of the truth itself: yea, and we also are witnessing, and ye know that our witness is true. Many things I had to have written, but I am not willing to be writing unto thee with ink and pen: but I am hoping straightway to see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace unto thee. The friends greet thee. Greet the friends by name.

DISCOURSE XVII.

THE QUIETNESS OF TRUE RELIGION.

"The elder unto the well beloved Gaius. . . . He that doeth good is of God; but he that doeth evil hath not seen God."—3 JOHN 1, 11.

THE mere analysis of this note must necessarily present a meagre outline. There is a brief expression of pleasure at the tidings of the sweet and gracious hospitality of Gaius which was brought by certain missionary brethren to Ephesus, coupled with the assurance of the truth and consistency of his whole walk. The haughty rejection of Apostolic letters of communion by Diotrephes is mentioned with a burst of indignation. A contrast to Diotrephes is found in Demetrius, with the threefold witness to a life so worthy of imitation. A brief greeting—and we have done with the last written words of St. John which the Church possesses.

I.

Let us *first* see whether, without passing over the bounds of historical probability, we can fill up this bare outline with some colouring of circumstance.

To two of the three individuals named in this Epistle we seem to have some clue.

The *Gaius* addressed is, of course, *Caius* in Latin, a very common prænomen, no doubt.

Three persons of the name appear in the New Testament[1]—unless we suppose St. John's Caius to be a fourth. But the generous and beautiful hospitality adverted to in this note is entirely of a piece with the character of him of whom St. Paul had written, "Gaius, mine host, and of the whole Church."[2] We know further, from one of the most ancient and authentic documents of Christian literature, that the Church of Corinth (to which this Caius belonged) was, just at the period when St. John wrote, in a lamentable state of schismatic confusion. Diotrephes may, at such a period, have been aspiring to put forward his claim at Corinth; and may, in his ambitious proceedings, have rejected from communion the brethren whom St. John had sent to Caius.[3] A yet more interesting reflection is suggested by a writing of considerable authority. The writer of the "Synopsis of Holy Scripture," which stands amongst the Works of Athanasius, says—"the Gospel according to John was both dictated by John the Apostle and beloved when in exile at Patmos, and by him was published in Ephesus, through Caius the beloved and friend of the Apostles, of whom Paul also writing to the Romans

[1] Caius, a Macedonian (Acts xix. 29); Caius of Derbe (Acts xx. 4); Caius of Corinth (Rom. xvi. 23; 1 Cor. i. 14).

[2] Rom. xvi. 23.

[3] No doubt ver. 10 presents some difficulty. Voyages between Corinth were regularly and easily performed. Still it is scarcely probable that the aged Apostle should have contemplated such a voyage. But the form (ἐὰν ἔλθω) purposely expresses possibility rather than probability—the smallest amount of presumption—if I shall come, which is not quite impossible. (Donaldson, *Gr. Gr.*, "Conditional Propositions." 501.) The hope of seeing Caius "face to face" (ver. 14) contains no objection, as it may refer to a visit o Caius to Ephesus.

saith, *Caius mine host, and of the whole Church.*"[1] This would give a very marked significance to one touch in this Third Epistle of St. John. The phrase here "and we bear witness also, *and ye know that our witness is true*"—clearly points back to the closing attestation of the Gospel—"*and we know that his witness is true.*"[2] He counts upon a quick recognition of a common memory.[3]

Demetrius is, of course, a name redolent of the worship of Demeter the Earth-Mother, and of Ephesian surroundings. No reader of the New Testament needs to be reminded of the riot at Ephesus, which is told at such length in the history of St. Paul's voyages by St. Luke. The conjecture that the agitator of the turbulent guild of silversmiths who made silver shrines of Diana may have become the Demetrius, the object of St. John's lofty commendation, is by no means improbable. There is a peculiar fulness in the narrative of the Acts, and an amplitude and exactness in the reports of the speeches of Demetrius and of the town-clerk which betray both unusually detailed information, and a feeling on the part of the writer that the subject was one of much interest for many readers. The very words of Demetrius about Paul evince that uneasy sense of the powers of fascination possessed by the Apostle which is often the first timid witness of reluctant conviction.[4] The

[1] "Synopsis S.S." '76. (S. Athanas., *Opp.*, iv. 433. Edit. Migne.)

[2] Read together 3 John 12, and John xxi. 24.

[3] The writer had worked out his conclusions about Caius independently before he happened to read Bengel's note. "Caius *Corinthi* de quo Rom. xvi. 23, vel huic Caio, Johannis amico, fuit *simillimus* in hospitalite—vel *idem*;—si idem, ex Achaia in Asiam migravit, vel Corinthum Johannes hanc epistolaom misit."

[4] "Almost throughout all Asia this Paul hath persuaded and turned

whole story would be of thrilling interest to those who, knowing well what Demetrius had become, were here told what he once had been. In a very ancient document (the so-called "Apostolic Constitutions")[1] we read that "Demetrius was appointed Bishop of Philadelphia by me," *i.e.*, by the Apostle John. To the Bishop of that city, so often shaken by the earthquakes of that volcanic city, came the commendation—"I know thy works that thou didst keep My word;" and the assuring promise that he should, when the victory was won, have the solidity and permanence of "a pillar" in a "temple"[2] that no convulsion could shake down. The witness then, which stands on record for the Bishop of Philadelphia, is threefold; the threefold witness of the First Epistle on a reduced scale—the witness of the world;[3] the witness of the Truth itself, even of Jesus;[4] the witness of the Church—including John.[5]

II.

We may now advert to the *contents* and *general style* of this letter.

1. As to its *contents*.

1. It supplies us with a valuable test of Christian life, in what may be called the Christian instinct of *missionary affection*, possessed in such full measure by Caius.[6]

away much people, saying, that they be no gods, which are made with hands."—Acts xix. 26.

[1] vii. 46.

[2] Apoc. iii. 7, 8, 12.

[3] "All men."

[4] Καὶ ὑπ' αὐτῆς τῆς ἀληθείας, *i.e.*, Jesus (Apoc. iii. 7, 12).

[5] "And we also bear witness." 3 John 12.

[6] 3 John 5, 6, 7.

This, indeed, is an ingredient of Christian character. Do we admire and feel attracted by missionaries? They are knight-errants of the Faith; leaders of the "forlorn hope" of Christ's cause; bearers of the flag of the cross through the storms of battle. Do we wish to honour and to help them, and feel ennobled by doing so? He who has no almost enthusiastic regard for missionaries has not the spirit of primitive Christianity within his breast.

2. The Church is beset with different dangers from very different quarters. The second Epistle of St. John has its bold unmistakable warning of danger from the philosophical atmosphere which is not only round the Church, but necessarily finds its way within. Those who assume to be leaders of intellectual and even of spiritual progress sometimes lead away from Christ. The test of scientific truth is accordance with the proposition which embodies the last discovery; the test of religious truth is accordance with the proposition which embodies the first discovery, *i.e.*, "the doctrine of Christ. Progress outside this is regress; it is desertion first of Christ, ultimately of God.[1] As the second Epistle warns the Church of peril from *speculative ambition*, so the third Epistle marks a danger from *personal ambition*,[2] arrogating to itself undue authority within the Church. Diotrephes in all probability was a bishop. At Rome there has been a permanent Diotrephes in the office of the Papacy; how much this has had to say to the dislocation of Christendom, God knows. But there are other smaller and more vulgar continuators of Diotrephes, who occupy no Vatican. Priests! But there are priests in different senses. The

[1] 2 John 9. [2] 3 John 9, 10.

priest who stands to minister in holy things, the true *Leitourgos*, is rightly so-called. But there is an arrogant priestship which would do violence to conscience, and interpose rudely between God and the soul. Priests in this sense are called by different names. They are clad in different dresses—some in chasubles, some in frock-coats, some in petticoats. "Down with priest-craft!" is even the cry of many of them. The priest who stands to offer sacrifice may or may not be a priest in the evil sense; the priest (who abjures the name) who is a master of religious small-talk of the popular kind, and winds people to his own ends round his little finger by using them deftly, is often the modern edition of Diotrephes.

3. This brief Epistle contains one of those apparently mere spiritual *truisms*, which make St. John the most powerful and comprehensive of all spiritual teachers. He had suggested a warning to Caius, which serves as the link to connect the example of Diotrephes which he has denounced, with that of Demetrius which he is about to commend. "Beloved!" he cries, "imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good." A glorious little "Imitation of Christ," a compression of his own Gospel, the record of the Great Example in three words![1] Then follows this absolutely exhaustive division, which covers the whole moral and spiritual world. "He that doeth good," (the whole principle of whose moral life is this,) "is of," has his origin from, "God;" "he that doeth evil hath not seen God," sees Him not as a consequence of having spiritually looked upon Him. Here, at last, we have the flight of the eagle's wing, the glance of the eagle's eye.

[1] *μιμοῦ . . . τὸ ἀγαθόν*, 3 John 11.

Especially valuable are these words, almost at the close of the Apostolic age and of the New Testament Scripture. They help us to keep the delicate balance of truth; they guard us against all abuse of the precious doctrines of grace. Several texts are *mutilated;* more are conveniently *dropped out.* How seldom does one see the whole context quoted, in tracts and sheets, of that most blessed passage—"if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, *the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin!*" How often do we see these words at all—"he that doeth good is of God, but he that doeth evil hath not seen God?" Perhaps it may be a lingering suspicion that a text which comes out of a very short Epistle is worth very little. Perhaps doctrinalism *à outrance* considers that the sentiment "savours of works." But, at all events, there is terrible decisiveness about these antithetic propositions. For each life is described in section and in plan by one or other of the two. The whole complicated series of thought, actions, habits, purposes, summed up in the words *life* and *character*, is a continuous stream issuing from the man who *does* every moment of his existence. The stream is either pure, bright, cleansing, gladdening, capable of being tracked by a thread of emerald wherever it flows; or it carries with it on its course blackness, bitterness, and barrenness. Men must be plainly dealt with. They may hold any creed, or follow any round of religious practices. There are creeds which are nobly true, others which are false and feeble—practices which are beautiful and elevating, others which are petty and unprofitable. They may repeat the shibboleth ever so accurately; and follow the observances ever so closely. They may sing hymns until their throats are hoarse, and beat drums until

their wrists are sore. But St. John's propositions ring out, loud and clear, and syllable themselves in questions, which one day or other the conscience will put to us with terrible distinctness. Are you one who is ever doing good; or one who is not doing good? "God be merciful to me a sinner!" may well rush to our lips. But *that*, when opportunity is given, must be followed by another prayer. Not only—"wash away my sins." Something more. "Fill and purify me with Thy Spirit, that, pardoned and renewed, I may become good, and be doing good." It is sometimes said that the Church is full of souls "dying of their morality." Is it not at least equally true to say that the Church is full of souls dying of their spirituality? That is—souls dying in one case of unreal morality; in the other of unreal spirituality, which juggles with spiritual words, making a sham out of them. Morality which is not spiritual, is imperfect; spirituality which is not moralized through and through is of the spirit of evil.

It is a great thing that in these last sentences, written with a trembling hand, which shrank from the labour of pen and ink,[1] the Apostle should have lifted a word (probably current in the social atmosphere of Ephesus among spiritualists and astrologists[2]), from the low associations with which it was undeservedly associated; and should have rung out high and clear the Gospel's everlasting justification, the final harmony of the teaching of grace—"he that doeth good is of God."

[1] 3 John 13.

[2] The verb ἀγαθοποιεῖν is found in a few places in the LXX. and New Testament. "Amongst profane writers, astrologers only used this verb. They signified by it, *I offer a good omen.* So in Proclus and others." See Bretsth, and Grimm, s. v. ἀγαθοποιέω.

II.

The style of the third Epistle of St. John is certainly that of an old man. It is reserved in language and in doctrine. God is thrice and thrice only mentioned.[1] Jesus is not once expressly uttered. But

> ". . . They are not empty-hearted whose low sound
> Reverbs no hollowness."

In religion, as in everything else, we are earnest, not by aiming at earnestness, but by aiming at an object. Religious language should be deep and real, rather than demonstrative. It is not safe to play with sacred names. To pronounce them at random for the purpose of being effective and impressive is to take them in vain. What a wealth of reverential love there is in that —"for the sake of the Name!"[2] Old copyists sometimes thought to improve upon the impressiveness of Apostles by cramming in sacred names. They only maimed what they touched with clumsy hand. A deeper sense of the Sacramental Presence is in the hushed, awful, reverence of "not discerning the Body," than in the interpolated "not discerning of the Lord's Body." Even so "The Name," perhaps, speaks more to the heart, and implies more than "His Name." It is, indeed, the "beautiful Name," by the which we are called. And sometimes in sermons, or in Eucharistic "Gloria in Excelsis," or in hymns that have come from such as St. Bernard, or in sick rooms, it shall go up with our sweetest music, and waken our tenderest thoughts, and be "as ointment

[1] "Worthily of God" ver. 6; "is of God—hath not seen God" ver. 11.

[2] Ver. 7.

poured forth." But what an underlying Gospel, what an intense suppressed flame there is behind these quiet words! This letter says nothing of rapture, or prophecy, of miracle. It lies in the atmosphere of the Church, as we find it even now. It has a word for *friendship*. It seeks to *individualise* its benediction.[1] A hush of evening rests upon the note. May such an evening close upon our old age!

NOTES.

Ver. 2. . . . *thy soul.*] Strange difficulty seems to be felt in some quarters about the word ψυχή, as used by our Lord and the Apostles. The difficulty arises from a singular argument advanced by M. Renan. He maintains that Christ and His first followers knew nothing of "the soul" as the immortal principle in man—that in him which is capable of being saved or lost. It was simply *either* the animal natural life,[2] (Matt. ii. 20); *or* at most the vague Greek immortality of the shadows, as opposed to the later Hebrew Resurrection-life. But there are very numerous passages in the New Testament where "soul" *can* only be used for "life as created by God;" thinking substance, different from the body and indestructible by death, created with possibilities of eternal happiness or misery. (The following passages are decisive—Matt. x. 28, xi. 29; Acts ii. 27; Heb. xiii. 17; 1 Pet. i. 9, 22; ii. 11, 25; Jas. i. 21, v. 20; Apoc. vi. 9, xx. 4; 3 John 2.)

[1] "The friends salute thee: salute the friends by name," ver. 14. The mention of friendship is not common in the New Testament. Beautiful exceptions will be found in Luke xii. 4; John xi. 11, xv. 14, 15; cf. Acts xxvii. 3.

[2] As indicated by breathing—from ψύχω.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

IN ordinary circumstances one who undertakes to comment upon a book of the New Testament may be justly expected to make every effort to explain each successive clause and each difficult expression of the book on which he writes. My aim in the following Commentary is rather to catch the general import and object of the Revelation of St. John considered as a whole. The latter purpose indeed cannot be attained unless the commentator has himself paid faithful attention to the former; but it is not necessary that the results of these inquiries should in every case be presented to the English reader. To him this book is for the most part a perplexity and enigma, and he would only be embarrassed by a multitude of details. It seemed well, therefore, to treat the book in its sections and paragraphs rather than verse by verse; and this is the course pursued in the following pages. The translation used is for the most part that of the Revised Version. An examination of the words and

clauses of the book, conducted upon a plan different from that here adopted, and much more minute in its character, will be found in the Author's Commentary on the Apocalypse, in the Commentary upon the books of the New Testament edited by Professor Schaff and published by Messrs. Clark, Edinburgh. The principles upon which the Author has proceeded have been fully discussed in his Baird Lectures.

THE UNIVERSITY, ABERDEEN,
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CHAPTER I.

THE PROLOGUE.

Rev. i.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show unto His servants, even the things which must shortly come to pass: and He sent and signified it through His angel unto His servant John; who bare witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, even of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein: for the season is at hand (i. 1-3).

THE first chapter of Revelation introduces us to the whole book, and supplies in great measure the key by which we are to interpret it. The book is not intended to be a mystery in the sense in which we commonly understand that word. It deals indeed with the future, the details of which must always be dark to us; and it does this by means of figures and symbols and modes of speech far removed from the ordinary simplicity of language which marks the New Testament writers. But it is not on that account designed to be unintelligible. The figures and symbols employed in it are used with perfect regularity; its peculiar modes of speech are supposed to be at least not unfamiliar to the reader; and it is taken for granted that he understands them. The writer obviously expects that his meaning, so far from being obscured by his style, will be thereby illustrated, enforced, and brought home to the mind, with greater than ordinary power. The

word *Revelation* by which he describes to us the general character of his work is of itself sufficient to show this. "Revelation" means the uncovering of that which has hitherto been covered, the drawing back of a veil which has hung over a person or thing, the laying bare what has been hitherto concealed; and the book before us is a revelation instead of a mystery.

Again, the book is a *revelation of Jesus Christ;* not so much a revelation of what Jesus Christ Himself is, as one of which He is the Author and Source. He is the Head of His Church, reigning supreme in His heavenly abode. He is the Eternal Son, the Word without whom was not anything made that was made, and who executes all the purposes of the Father, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." [1] He is at the same time "Head over all things to the Church." [2] He regulates her fortunes. He controls in her behalf the events of history. He fills the cup which He puts into her hand with prosperity or adversity, with joy or sorrow, with victory or defeat. Who else can impart a revelation so true, so weighty, and so precious?

Yet again, the revelation to be now given by Jesu Christ is one *which God gave Him*, the revelation of the eternal and unchangeable plan of One who turneth the hearts of kings as the rivers of water, who saith and it is done, who commandeth and it stands fast.

Finally, the revelation relates to things that *must shortly come to pass*, and thus has all the interest of the present, and not merely of a far-distant future.

Such is the general character of that revelation which Jesus Christ *sent and signified through His angel*

[1] John v. 19; Heb. xiii. 8. [2] Eph. i. 22.

unto His servant John. And that Apostle faithfully recorded it for the instruction and comfort of the Church. Like his Divine Master, with whom throughout all this book believers are so closely identified, and who is Himself *the Amen, the faithful and true witness*,[1] the disciple whom He loved stands forth to bear witness of *the word of God* thus given him, of *the testimony of Jesus* thus signified to him, *even of all things that he saw.* He places himself in thought at the end of the visions he had witnessed, and re-traces for others the elevating pictures which had filled, as he beheld them, his own soul with rapture.

Therefore may he now, ere yet he enters upon his task, pronounce a blessing upon those who shall pay due heed to what he is to say. Does he think of the person by whom the apostolic writings were read aloud in the midst of the Christian congregation? then, *Blessed is he that readeth.* Does he think of those who listen? then, Blessed are *they that hear the words of the prophecy.* Or, lastly, does he think not merely of reading and hearing, but of that laying up in the heart to which these were only preparatory? then, Blessed are they that *keep the things which are written therein, for the season*, the short season in which everything shall be accomplished, *is at hand.*

The Introduction to the book is over; and it may be well to mark for a moment that tendency to divide his matter into three parts which peculiarly distinguishes St. John, and to which, as supplying an important rule of interpretation, we shall often have occasion to refer. There are obviously three parts in the Introduction,—the Source, the Contents, and the Importance of

[1] Chap. iii. 14.

the revelation: and each of these is again divided into three. Three persons are mentioned when the Source is spoken of,—God, Jesus Christ, and the servants of Jesus; three when the Contents are referred to,—the Word of God, the Testimony of Jesus, and All things that he saw; and three when the Importance of the book is described,—He that readeth, They that hear, and They that keep the things written therein.

John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins in His blood; and He made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, He cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they which pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth shall wail over Him. Even so, Amen. I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord, God, which is and which was and which is to come, the Almighty (i. 4-8).

From the Introduction we pass to the Salutation, extending from ver. 4 to ver. 8. Adopting a method different from that of the fourth Gospel, which is also the production of his pen, the writer of Revelation names himself. The difference is easily explained. The fourth Gospel is original not only in its contents but its form. The Apocalypse is moulded after the fashion of the ancient prophets, and of the numerous apocalyptic authors of the time; and it was the practice of both these classes of writers to place their names at the head of what they wrote. The fourth Gospel was also intended to set forth in a purely objective manner the glory of the Eternal Word made flesh, and that too in such a way that the glory exhibited in Him should

authenticate itself, independently of human testimony. The Apocalypse needed a voucher from one known and trusted. It came through the mind of a man, and we naturally ask, Who is the man through whom it came? The enquiry is satisfied, and we are told that it comes from *John*. In telling us this St. John speaks with the authority which belongs to him. By-and-by we shall see him in another light, occupying a position similar to ours, and standing on the same level with us in the covenant of grace. But at this moment he is the Apostle, the Evangelist, the Minister of God, a consecrated priest in the Christian community who is about to pronounce a priestly blessing on the Church Let the Church bow her head and reverently receive it.

The Salutation is addressed *to the seven churches which are in Asia*. On this point it is enough to say that by the Asia spoken of we are to understand neither the continent of that name, nor its great western division Asia Minor, but only a single district of the latter, of which Ephesus, where St. John spent the later years of his life and ministry, was the capital. There the aged Apostle tended all those portions of the flock of Christ that he could reach, and all the churches of the neighbourhood were his peculiar care. We know that these were in number more than seven. We know that to no church could the Apostle be indifferent. The conclusion is irresistible, that here, as so often in this book as well as in other parts of Scripture, the number seven is not to be literally understood. Seven churches are selected, the condition of which appeared most suitable to the purpose which the Apostle has in view; and these seven represent the Church of Christ in every country of the world, down

to the very end of time. The universal Church spreads itself out beneath his gaze; and before he instructs he blesses it.

The blessing is, *Grace to you, and peace;* grace first, the Divine grace, in its enlightening, quickening, and beautifying power; and then peace, peace with God and man, peace that in the deep recesses of the heart remains undisturbed by outward trouble, the peace of which it is said by Him who is the Prince of peace, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful."[1]

The source of the blessing is next indicated,—the Triune God, the three Persons of the glorious Trinity, the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Son. Probably we should have thought of a different order; but the truth is that it is the Son, as the manifestation of the Godhead, who is mainly in the Apostle's mind. Hence the peculiarity of the first designation, *Him which is, and which was, and which is to come*, a designation specially applicable to our Lord. Hence also the peculiarity of the second designation, *The seven Spirits which are before His throne;* not so much the Spirit viewed in His individual personality, in the eternal relations of the Divine existence, as that Spirit in the manifoldness of His operation in the Church, the Spirit of the glorified Redeemer,—not one therefore, but seven. Hence, again, the peculiar designation of Christ, *Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth;* not so much the Son in His metaphysical relation to the Godhead, as in attributes connected with His redemptive work. And hence,

[1] John xiv. 27.

finally, the fact that when these three Persons been named, the Seer fills up the remaining verses of his Salutation with thoughts, not of the Trinity, but of Him who has already redeemed us, and who will in due time come to perfect our salvation.

Now, therefore, the Church, reflecting upon all that has been done, is done, and shall be done for her, is able to raise the song of triumphant thanksgiving, *Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins in His blood, and He made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.* In these words the possession of complete redemption is implied. The true reading of the original is not that of our Authorised Version, "Unto Him that washed," but "Unto Him that loosed" us from our sins. We have received not merely the pardon of sin, but deliverance from its power. "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and we are escaped."[1] The chains in which Satan held us captive have been snapped asunder and we are free. Again, this loosing has taken place "in" rather than "by" the blood of Christ, for the blood of Christ is living blood, and in that life of His we are enfolded and enwrapped, so that it is not we that live, but Christ that liveth in us. Once more they who are thus spoken of are "a kingdom, priests unto His God and Father," the former being the lower stage, the latter the higher. The word "kingdom" has reference, less to the splendour of royalty than to victory over foes. Christians reign in conquering their spiritual enemies; and then, in possession of the victory that overcometh the world,

[1] Psalm cxxiv. 7.

they enter into the innermost sanctuary of the Most High and dwell in the secret of His Tabernacle. There their great High Priest is one with "His God and Father," and there they also dwell with His Father and their Father, with His God and their God.

The statement of these verses, however, reveals not only what the Christian Church is to which the Apocalypse is addressed; it reveals also what the Lord is from whom the revelation comes. He is indeed the Saviour who died for us, the witness faithful unto death: but He is also the Saviour who rose again, who is the firstborn of the dead, and who has ascended to the right hand of God, where He lives and reigns in glory everlasting. It is the glorified Redeemer from whom the book of His revelation comes; and He has all power committed to Him both in heaven and on earth. More particularly, He is "the ruler of the kings of the earth." This is not a description of such honour as might be given by a crowd of loyal nobles to a beloved prince. It rather gives expression to a power by which "the kings of the earth," the potentates of a sinful world, are subdued and crushed.

Lastly, the Salutation includes the thought that He who is now hidden in heaven from our view, will yet appear in the glory that belongs to Him. He is the Lord who "is to come"; or, as it is expanded in the words immediately following the doxology, *Behold, He cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they which pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth shall wail over Him. Even so, Amen.* It is of importance to ask what the glory is in which the glorified Lord is thus spoken of as coming. Is it that of one who shall be the object of admiration to every eye, and who, by the revelation of Himself, shall win all who

behold Him to godly penitence and faith? The context forbids such an interpretation. The tribes "of the earth" are like its kings in ver. 5, the tribes of an ungodly world, and the "wailing" is that of chap. xviii. 9, where the same word is used, and where the kings of the earth weep and wail over the fall of guilty Babylon, which they behold burning before their eyes. The tones of that judgment which is to re-echo throughout the book are already heard: "Give the king Thy judgments, O God, and Thy righteousness unto the king's Son. He shall judge the people with righteousness, and Thy poor with judgment"; "Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily, He is a God that judgeth in the earth."[1]

And now the glorified Redeemer Himself declares what He is: *I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord, God, which is and which was and which is to come, the Almighty.* It will be observed that after the word "Lord" we have interposed a comma not found in either the Authorised or the Revised Version.[2] On various other occasions we shall have to do the same, and the call to do so arises partly from the connexion of the thought, partly from St. John's love of that tripartite division of an idea which has been already spoken of. The former does not lead us to the Father; it leads us, on the contrary, to the Son. He it is Who has been described immediately before, and with Him the description which follows is to be occupied. No doubt the thought of God, of the Father, lies immediately behind the words. No doubt also "the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing"; yet "what things soever He doeth, these the Son also

[1] Psalm lxxii. 1, 2; lviii. 11.
[2] Compare the Greek text of Westcott and Hort.

doeth in like manner."[1] By the Son the Father acts. In the Son the Father speaks. The Son is the manifestation of the Father. The same Divine attributes, therefore, which are to be seen in the Father, are to be seen in the Son. Let us hear Him as He seals His intimations of coming judgment with the assurance that He is God, who has come who is and who is to come, the Almighty.

I John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it to the seven churches; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamum, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice which spake with me. And having turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. And His head and His hair were white as white wool, white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace; and His voice as the voice of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as one dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living One; And I became dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. Write therefore the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter; the mystery of the stars which thou sawest upon My right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks are seven churches (i. 9-20).

After the Introduction and Salutation, the visions of the book begin, the first being the key to all that

[1] John v. 19.

follow. The circumstances amidst which it was given are described, not merely to satisfy curiosity, or to afford information, but to establish such a connexion between St. John and his readers as shall authenticate and vivify its lessons.

I John, he begins, *your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.* It is no longer only the Apostle, the authoritative messenger of God, who speaks; it is one who occupies the same ground as other members of the Church, and is bound to them by the strong deep tie of common sorrow. The aged and honoured Evangelist, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," is one with them, bears the same burden, drinks the same cup, and has no higher consolation than they may have. He is their "brother," a brother in adversity, for he is a partaker with them of the "tribulation" that is in Jesus. The reference is to outward suffering and persecution; for the words of the Master were now literally fulfilled: "A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted Me they will also persecute you;" "Yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you shall think that he offereth service unto God."[1] The scorn, the hatred, the persecution of the world! for such as were exposed to these things was the Apocalypse written, by such was it understood; and if, in later times, it has often failed to make its due impression on the minds of men, it is because it is not intended for those who are at ease in Zion. The more Christians are compelled to feel that the world hates them, and that they cannot be its friends,

[1] John xv. 20; xvi. 2.

the greater to them will be the power and beauty of this book. Its revelations, like the stars of the sky, shine most brightly in the cold, dark night.

"Tribulation" is the chief thing spoken of, but the Apostle, with his love of groups of three, accompanies it with other two marks of the Christian's condition in the world,—the "kingdom" and "patience" that are in Jesus. St. John therefore was in tribulation. He had been driven from Ephesus, we know not why, and had been banished to Patmos, a small rocky island of the Ægean Sea. He had been banished for his faith, for his adherence to "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus," the former expression leading our thoughts to the revelation of the Old Testament, the latter to that of the New; the former to those prophets, culminating in the Baptist, of whom the same Apostle who now writes tells us in the beginning of his Gospel, that they "came for witness, that they might bear witness of the light;"[1] the latter to "the true light, even the light which lighteth every man coming into the world."[2] Driven from the society of his friends and "children," we cannot doubt that St. John would be drawn even more closely than was his wont to the bosom of his Lord; would feel that he was still protected by His care; would remember the words uttered by Him in the most sublime and touching moment of His life, "And I am no more in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name which Thou hast given Me";[3] and would share the blessed experience of knowing that, on every spot of earth however remote, and amidst all trials however heavy, he was in the hands of One who stills

[1] John i. 7. [2] John i. 9. [3] John xvii. 11.

the tumults of the people as well as the waves of the sea beating upon the rock-bound coast of Patmos.

Animated by feelings such as these, the Apostle knew that, whatever appearances to the contrary might present themselves, the time now passing over his head was the time of the Lord's rule, and not of man's. No thought could be more inspiring, and it was the preparation in his soul for the scene which followed.

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it to the seven churches; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamum, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. The *Lord's day* here referred to may have been the Sunday, the first day of the Christian week, the day commemorative of that morning when He who had been "crucified through weakness, yet lived through the power of God."[1] If so, there was a peculiar fitness in that vision, now to be granted, of the risen and glorified Redeemer. But it seems doubtful if this is the true interpretation. Proof is wanting that the first day of the week had yet received the name of "The Lord's Day," and it is more in accordance with the prophetic tone of the book before us, to think that by St. John the whole of that brief season which was to pass before the Church should follow her Lord to glory was regarded as "The Lord's Day." Whichever interpretation we adopt, the fact remains that, meditating in his lonely isle upon the glory of his Lord in heaven and the contrasted fortunes of His Church on earth, St. John passed into a state of spiritual ecstasy. Like St. Paul, he was

[1] 2 Cor. xiii. 4.

caught up into the third heavens; but, unlike him, he was permitted, and even commanded, to record what he heard and saw.[1]

And I heard behind me, he says, *a great voice as of a trumpet, saying, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it to the seven churches; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamum, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.* We need not dwell now upon these churches. We shall meet them again. They are "the seven churches which are in Asia" already spoken of in ver. 4; and they are to be viewed as representative of the whole Christian Church in all countries of the world, and throughout all time. In their condition they represented to St. John what that Church is, in her Divine origin and human frailty, in her graces and defects, in her zeal and lukewarmness, in her joys and sorrows, in the guardianship of her Lord, and in her final victory after many struggles. Not to Christians in these cities alone is the Apocalypse spoken, but to all Christians in all their circumstances: "He that hath an ear, let him hear." The Apostle heard.

And I turned to see the voice which spake with me. And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a Son of man. It was a splendid vision which was thus presented to his eyes. The golden candlestick, first of the Tabernacle and then of the Temple, was one of the gorgeous articles of furniture in God's holy house. It was wrought, with its seven branches, after the fashion of an almond tree, the earliest tree of spring to hasten (whence also it was named) into blossom; and, as we learn from the

[1] Compare 2 Cor. xii. 4.

elaborateness and beauty of the workmanship, from the symbolical numbers largely resorted to in its construction, and from the analogy of all the furniture of the Tabernacle, it represented Israel when that people, having offered themselves at the altar, and having been cleansed in the laver of the court, entered as a nation of priests into the special dwelling-place of their heavenly King. Here, therefore, the seven golden candlesticks, or as in ver. 4 the one in seven, represent the Church, as she burns in the secret place of the Most High.

But we are not invited to dwell upon the Church. Something greater attracts the eye,—He who is "like unto a Son of man." The expression of the original is remarkable. It occurs only once in any of the other books of the New Testament, in John v. 27, although there, both in the Authorised and Revised versions, it is unhappily translated "the Son of man." It is the humanness of our Lord's Person more than the Person Himself, or rather it is the Person in His humanness, to which the words of the original direct us. Amidst all the glory that surrounds Him we are to think of Him as man; but what a man!

Clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. And His head and His hair were white as white wool, white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto burnished brass as if it had been refined in a furnace; and His voice as the voice of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars; and out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shineth in His strength. The particulars of the description indicate the official position of the Person spoken of, and the character in which He

appears. (1) He is a priest, clothed with the long white garment reaching to the feet that was a distinguishing part of the priestly dress, but at the same time so wearing the girdle at the breasts, not at the waist, as to show that He was a priest engaged in the active service of the sanctuary. (2) He is a king, for, with the exception of the last mentioned particular, all the other features of the description given of Him point to kingly rather than to priestly power, while the prophetic language of Isaiah, as he looks forward to Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, language which we may well suppose to have been now in the Seer's thoughts, leads to the same conclusion: "And I will clothe him with thy robe and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand."[1] The "Son of man," in short, here brought before us in His heavenly glory, is both Priest and King.

Not only so. It is even of peculiar importance to observe that the attributes with which the Priest-King is clothed are not so much those of tenderness and mercy as those of power and majesty, inspiring the beholder with a sense of awe and with the fear of judgment. Already we have had some traces of this in considering ver. 7: now it comes out in all its force. That hair of a glistering whiteness which, like snow on which the sun is shining, it almost pains the eye to look upon; those eyes penetrating like a flame of fire into the inmost recesses of the heart; those feet which like metal raised to a white heat in a furnace consume in an instant whatever they tread upon in anger; that voice loud and continuous, like the sound of the mighty sea as it booms along the shore; that sword sharp, two-

[1] Isa. xxii. 21; comp. also ver. 22 with Rev iii. 7.

edged, issuing from the mouth, so that no one can escape it when it is drawn to slay; and lastly, that countenance like the sun in the height of a tropical sky, when man and beast cower from the irresistible scorching of his beams,—all are symbolical of judgment. Eager to save, the exalted High Priest is yet also mighty to destroy. "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now, therefore, O ye Kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."[1]

The Apostle felt all this; and, believer as he was in Jesus, convinced of his Master's love, and one who returned that love with the warmest affections of his heart, he was yet overwhelmed with terror. *And when I saw Him*, he tells us, *I fell at His feet as one dead.* In circumstances somewhat similar to the present, a somewhat similar effect had been produced upon other saints of God. When Isaiah beheld the glory of the Lord he cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."[2] When Ezekiel beheld a visior of the same kind, he tells us that he "fell upon his face."[3] When the angel Gabriel appeared to Daniel in order to explain the vision which had been shown him, the prophet says, "I was afraid, and fell upon my face."[4] Here the effect was greater than in any of these instances, corresponding to the greater

[1] Psalm ii. 9-12. [2] Isa. vi. 5. [3] Ezek. i. 28. [4] Dan. viii. 17.

glory shown; and the Apostle fell at the feet of the glorified Lord as one "dead." But there is mercy with the Lord that He may be feared; and *He laid His right hand upon me*, adds St. John, *saying, Fear not:* and then follows in three parts that full and gracious declaration of what He is, in His eternal pre-existence, in that work on behalf of man which embraced not only His being lifted on high upon the cross, but His Resurrection and Ascension to His Father's throne, and in the consummation of His victory over all the enemies of our salvation,—1. *I am the First and the Last, and the Living One;* 2. *And I became dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore;* 3. *And I have the keys of death and of Hades.*

A few more words are spoken by the glorified Person who thus appeared to St. John, but at this point we may pause for a moment, for the vision is complete. It is the first vision of the book, and it contains the key-note of the whole. As distinguished from the fourth Gospel, in which Jesus clothed as He is with His humanity is yet pre-eminently the Son of God, the Saviour while here retaining His Divinity is yet pre-eminently a Son of man. In other words, He is not merely the Only Begotten who was from eternity in the bosom of the Father: He is also Head over all things to His Church. And He is this as the glorified Redeemer who has finished His work on earth, and now carries it on in heaven. This work too He carries on, not only as a High Priest "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," but as One clothed with judgment. He is a man of war, and to Him the words of the Psalmist may be applied:

> "Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Mighty One,
> Thy glory and Thy majesty.

And in Thy majesty ride prosperously,
Because of truth and meekness and righteousness:
And Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things.
Thine arrows are sharp;
The peoples fall under Thee;
They are in the heart of the King's enemies."[1]

Yet we cannot separate the body of Christ from the head, who is Son of man as well as Son of God. With the Head the members are one, and they too therefore are here contemplated as engaged in a work of judgment. With their Lord they are opposed by an ungodly world. In it they also struggle, and war, and overcome. The tribulation, and the kingdom and patience "in Jesus,"[2] are their lot; but living a resurrection life and escaped from the power of death and Hades, salvation has been in principle made theirs, and they have only to wait for the full manifestation of that Lord with whom, when He is manifested, they also shall be manifested in glory.[3]

Thus we are taught what to expect in the book of Revelation. It will record the conflict of Christ and His people with the evil that is in the world, and their victory over it. It will tell of struggle with sin and Satan, but of sin vanquished and Satan bruised beneath their feet. It will be the story of the Church as she journeys through the wilderness to the land of promise, encountering many foes, but more than conqueror through Him that loved her, and often raising to heaven her song of praise, "Sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider He hath cast into the sea."[4]

Now then we are prepared to listen to the closing words of the glorious Person who had revealed Him-

[1] Psalm xlv. 3-5. [2] Ver. 9. [3] Col iii. 4. [4] Exod. xv. 1.

self to St. John, as He repeats His injunction to him to write, and gives him some explanation of what he had seen: *Write, therefore, the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter; the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest upon My right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks are seven churches.* The golden candlesticks and the stars, the churches and the angels of the churches, will immediately meet us when we proceed to the next two chapters of the book. Meanwhile it is enough to know that we are about to enter upon the fortunes of that Church of the Lord Jesus Christ in the world which embraces within it the execution of the final purposes of the Almighty, and the accomplishment of His plans for the perfection and happiness of His whole creation.

CHAPTER II.

THE CHURCH ON THE FIELD OF HISTORY.

Rev. ii., iii.

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write; These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, He that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks: I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them which call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false; and thou hast patience and didst bear for My name's sake, and hast not grown weary. But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God. And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which became dead, and lived again: I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write; These things saith He that hath the sharp two-edged sword: I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is: and thou holdest fast My name, and didst not deny My faith, even in the days of Antipas My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols

and to commit fornication. So hast thou also some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner. Repent therefore; or else I come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it. And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath His eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet are like unto burnished brass: I know thy works, and thy love and faith and ministry and patience, and that thy last works are more than the first. But I have this against thee, that thou sufferest thy wife Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and seduceth My servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time that she should repent; and she willeth not to repent of her fornication. Behold, I do cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto each one of you according to your works. But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, which know not the deep things of Satan, as they say; I cast upon you none other burden. Howbeit that which ye have, hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: and as a shepherd he shall tend them with a sceptre of iron, as the vessels of the potter are they broken to shivers; as I also have received of My Father: and I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. And to the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars: I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead. Be thou watchful, and stablish the things that remain, which were ready to die: for I have found no works of thine fulfilled before My God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and didst hear; and keep it, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. But thou hast a few names in Sardis which did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with Me in white; for they are worthy. He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels. He that hath an

ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and none shall shut, and that shutteth, and none openeth: I know thy works (behold, I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut), that thou hast a little power, and didst keep My word, and didst not deny My name. Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them which say they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou didst keep the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole inhabited earth, to try them that dwell upon the earth. I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown. He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall come no more forth: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God, and Mine own new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of My mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one, and miserable and poor and blind and naked: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich; and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me. He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with Me in My throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches (ii., iii.).

THE fortunes of the Church are to be traced in the Revelation of St. John; and the first thing necessary therefore is that we shall learn what the Church is. To accomplish this is the leading aim of

the second and third chapters of the book. An object precisely similar appears to determine the arrangement of the fourth Gospel. The Introduction or Prologue of that Gospel is found in chap. i. 1-18; and there can be no doubt that we meet there, in brief and compendious form, the ideas afterwards illustrated and enforced by its selection of incidents from the life of Jesus. After the Prologue follows a section, extending from chap. i. 19 to chap. ii. 11, in which it is obvious that that struggle of Jesus with the world, together with His victory over it, which it is the chief purpose of the Evangelist to relate, has not yet begun. The question thus arises, What is the aim of that section? and the answer is, that it is to set forth the Redeemer with whom the Gospel is to be occupied as He enters upon the field of history. Thus also here. The first chapter of Revelation is the Introduction or Prologue of the book, containing the ideas to be afterwards illustrated in the history of the Church. The struggle of the Church with the world does not yet begin, nor will it begin until we come to chap. vi. In the meantime we are to see in chaps. ii. and iii. that Body of Christ the struggle and victory of which are to engage our thoughts.

These chapters consist of seven epistles addressed to the churches of the seven cities of Asia named in chap. i. 11, and now written to in the same order, beginning with Ephesus and ending with Laodicea. Each epistle contains much that is peculiar to it, but we shall fail to understand the picture presented by the two chapters as a whole if we look only at the individual parts. General considerations, therefore, regarding the seven epistles first demand our notice.

Each epistle, it will be observed, is addressed to the "angel" of the church named. The object of this commentary, as explained in the prefatory note, renders an examination of the meaning of the word "angel" here used a point of subordinate importance. A few remarks, however, can hardly be avoided. The favourite interpretations of the term are two: that the "angels of the churches" are either the guardian angels to whom they were severally committed, or their bishops or chief pastors. Both interpretations may be unhesitatingly rejected. For as to the first, there is a total absence of proof that it was either a Jewish or an early Christian idea that each Christian community had its guardian angel; and as to the second, if there was, as there seems to have been, in the synagogues of the Jews, an official known as the "angel" or "messenger," he occupied an altogether inferior position, and possessed none of the authoritative control here ascribed to the several "angels" mentioned. Besides this, both interpretations are set aside by the single consideration that, keeping in view what has been said of the number seven in its relation to the number one, the seven angels, like the seven churches, must be capable of being regarded as a unity. But this cannot be the case with seven guardian angels, for such a universal guardianship can be predicated of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, alone. Nor can seven bishops or chief pastors be reasonably resolved into one universal bishop or the moderator of one universal presbytery. The true idea seems to be that the "angels" of the churches are a symbolical representation in which the *active*, as distinguished from the passive, life of the Church finds expression. To St. John every person, every thing, has its angel. God

proclaims and executes His will by angels.[1] He addresses even the Son by an angel.[2] The Son acts and reveals His truth by an angel.[3] The waters have an angel.[4] Fire has an angel.[5] The winds have an angel.[6] The abyss has an angel.[7] On all these occasions the "angel" is interposed when the persons or things spoken of are represented as coming out of themselves and as taking their part in intercourse or in action. In like manner the "angels of the churches" are the churches themselves, with this mark of distinction only,—that, when they are thus spoken of, they are viewed not merely as in possession of inward vigour, but as exercising it towards things without.

The interpretation now given is confirmed by the fact that the "angels," as appears from the words of chap. i. 20, "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches," are not different from the "stars," for it is the province of the star, instead of hiding itself in some secret chamber, to shine, and from its place in the firmament to shed light upon the earth. The uniformity of treatment, too, which must be claimed for the number seven when used both with the churches and the stars, is thus rendered possible; for if the former may represent the universal Church in what she *is*, the latter will represent the same Church in what she *does*. Thus, then, in the seven "golden candlesticks" and in the seven "stars" or "angels" we have a double picture of the Church; and each of the two figures employed points to a different aspect

[1] Chaps. vii. 2; viii. 2; xiv. 6, 8, 9; xv. 1, 6.
[2] Chap. xiv. 15.
[3] Chaps. i. 1; xx. 1; xxii. 6.
[4] Chap. xvi. 5.
[5] Chap. xiv. 18.
[6] Chap. vii. 1.
[7] Chap. ix. 11.

of her being. It is possible also that the double designation may have been chosen in conformity with a rule, often observed in the Apocalypse, which leads the writer to speak of the same thing, first under an emblem taken from Judaism, and then under one from the wider sphere of the great Gentile Church. The "golden candlestick" burning in the secret of God's Tabernacle gives the former, the "star" shining in the firmament the latter.

Such then being the case, the seven epistles being addressed to the seven churches, and not to any individual in each, the following particulars with regard to them ought to be kept in view:—

1. They are intended to set before us a picture of the universal Church. At first sight indeed it may seem as if they were only to be looked at individually and separately. The different churches are addressed by name. In what is said of each there is nothing out of keeping with what we may easily suppose to have been its condition at the time. There is as much reason to believe that each epistle contains an actual historical picture as there is to believe this in the case of the epistles of St. Paul to Rome, or Corinth, or Ephesus, or Philippi. Any other supposition would convey a false idea of the principles upon which the Apocalypse is framed, would destroy the reality of the Apostle's writing, and would compel us to think that his words must have been unintelligible to those for whom, whatever their further application, they were primarily designed. The question, however, is not thus exhausted; for it is perfectly possible that both certain churches and certain particulars in their state may have been selected rather than others, because they afforded the best typical representation of the

universal Church. Several reasons may satisfy us that this was actually done.

(1) We have good ground for believing that, besides these seven churches of Asia, there were other churches in existence in the same district at the time when the Apostle wrote. One of the early fathers speaks of churches at Magnesia and Tralles It is also possible that there were churches at Colossæ and Hierapolis, although these cities had suffered from an earthquake shortly after the days of St. Paul. Yet St. John addressed himself not to seven, but to "the seven churches which are in Asia," as if there were no more churches in the province.[1] More, however, there certainly were; and he cannot therefore have intended to address them all. He makes a selection, without saying that he does so; and it is a natural supposition that his selection is designed to represent the universal Church.

(2) Importance must be attached to the number seven. Every reader of the book of Revelation is familiar with the singular part played by that number in its structure, and with the fact that (unless chap. xvii. 9 be an exception) it never means that numeral alone. It is the number of unity in diversity, of unity in that manifoldness of operation which alone entitles it to the name of unity. Such expressions, therefore, as the "seven Spirits of God" or the "seven eyes of the Lamb," are evidently symbolical. The same idea must be carried through all the notices of the number, unless there be something in the context clearly leading to a different conclusion. Nothing of that kind exists here. Were these two chapters indeed out of harmony with the rest of the book, or had they little or no relation to it,

[1] Chap. i. 4.

it might be urged that they were simply historical, and that no deeper meaning was to be sought in them than that lying on the surface. We have already seen, however, that their connexion with the other chapters is of the closest kind; and we cannot therefore avoid bringing them under the scope of the same principles of interpretation as are elsewhere applicable. Their number—seven—must thus be regarded as typical of unity, and the seven churches as representative of the one universal Church.

(3) The nature of the call to the hearers of each epistle to give heed to the words addressed to them leads to the same conclusion. Had each epistle been designed only for those to whom it was immediately sent, that call would probably have been addressed to them alone. Instead of this it is couched in the most general form: *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.*

(4) The character in which the Saviour speaks to each of the seven churches is always taken from the vision of the Son of man beheld by St. John in the first chapter of his book. It is true that in the case of one or two of the particulars mentioned this is not at once apparent; but in that of by far the larger number it is so clear that we are entitled to infer the existence of some secret link of connexion in the mind of the sacred writer even when it may not be distinctly perceptible to us. The descriptions, too, of the epistles are no doubt fuller and more elaborate than those of the vision; but this circumstance is easily accounted for when we remember that the seven different delineations of our Lord contained in the second and third chapters are in the first chapter combined in one. Keeping these considerations in view, the main point is

incontestable that the germ of the epistolary description is to be found in every case in the preliminary vision.

Thus to the first church—that of Ephesus—Jesus introduces Himself as *He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, He that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks*[1]; and the description is evidently that of chap. i. 12, 13, 16, where the Seer beheld "seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a Son of man; and He had in His right hand seven stars." To the second—the church of Smyrna—Jesus introduces Himself with the words, *These things saith the first and the last, which became dead, and lived again*[2]; and the description is taken from chap. i. 17, 18: "I am the first and the last, and the Living One; and I became dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore." To the third—the church of Pergamum—the introduction is, *These things saith He that hath a sharp two-edged sword*[3]; and the original of the description is found in chap. i. 16: *and out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword.* To the fourth—the church of Thyatira—the Saviour begins, *These things saith the Son of God, who hath His eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like unto burnished brass*[4]; and we see the source whence the words are drawn when we read in chap. i. 14, 15, "And His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace." Of the latter part of the salutation to the fifth church—that of Sardis—which runs, *These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars*,[5] it is un-

[1] Chap. ii. 1.
[2] Chap. ii. 8.
[3] Chap. ii. 12.
[4] Chap. ii. 18.
[5] Chap. iii. 1.

necessary to speak; but the first part is more difficult to trace. Comparing chap. v. 6 and chap. iv. 5, we learn that the seven Spirits of God are the possession of the Redeemer, and that they are symbolized by seven lamps burning before the throne of God. Turning now to chap. i., we find the Seer speaking in ver. 4 of "the seven Spirits which are before the throne," those very spirits which in chap. v. 6 he tells us that the Redeemer "hath." This latter thought therefore he is accustomed to associate with them; and though in chap. i. 4 he does not expressly say that the seven Spirits there referred to are the possession of Jesus, this view of them is obviously a part of his general conception of the matter. In chap. i. 4, therefore, the source of the words addressed to Sardis is to be found. To the sixth church—that of Philadelphia—it is said, *These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and none shall shut, and that shutteth, and none openeth*[1]; and we can have no difficulty in recognising the germ of the extended description in chap. i. 14, 18, where we are told that Jesus Christ, in token of His holiness, hath "His head and His hair white as white wool, white as snow," and that He hath "the keys of death and of Hades." Lastly, we have the introductory address to the seventh church—that of Laodicea—*These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God*[2]; and the origin of it is to be seen in chap. i. 5, where we are told of "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness, and the first-born of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth." Each salutation of the seven epistles is thus part of the description

[1] Chap. iii. 7.

[2] Chap. iii. 14.

of the Son of man in the first chapter of the book; and it is a legitimate inference that the contents of the epistles are, like the salutations, only portions of one whole.

(5) Many expressions are to be met with in the seven epistles which find their explanation only in those later chapters of the book where a reference to the Church universal cannot be denied. The *tree of life* of the first epistle meets us again, more fully spoken of, in the description of the new Jerusalem.[1] The *second death* mentioned in the second epistle is not explained till judgment upon the Church's enemies is complete.[2] The writing upon believers of the *new name*, promised in the third epistle, is almost unintelligible until we behold the hundred and forty-four thousand upon Mount Zion.[3] The *authority over the nations*, and more especially the gift of *the morning star*, referred to in the fourth epistle, cannot be comprehended until we are introduced to the vision of the thousand years and the last utterances of the glorified Redeemer.[4] The *white garments* of the fifth epistle can hardly be rightly understood until we see the white-robed company standing before the throne and before the Lamb. The mention in the sixth epistle of *the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God*, remains a mystery until we actually witness her descent.[6] And, finally, the *sitting in Christ's throne* of the seventh epistle is only elucidated by the reign of the thousand years with Him.[7]

[1] Chaps. ii. 7; xxii. 2, 14.
[2] Chaps. ii. 11; xx. 14.
[3] Chaps. ii. 17; xiv. 1.
[4] Chaps. ii. 26, 28; xx. 4, 5; xxii. 16.
[5] Chaps. iii. 5; vii. 9, 14.
[6] Chaps. iii. 12; xxi. 2, 10.
[7] Chaps. iii. 21; xx. 4. Comp. Trench, *The Seven Epistles*, p. 37

(6) It is worthy of notice that the descriptions of our Lord given in the first and last epistles have a wider application than to the churches of Ephesus and Laodicea, to which they are immediately addressed, thus making it evident that, while each of these epistles has its own place in the series, it is at the same time treated as the first or last member of a group which is to be regarded as a whole.

To the church of Ephesus the Saviour describes Himself as *He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, He that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks*[1]; and the description has no more reference to Ephesus than to any other of the churches named. In like manner to the church of Laodicea He describes Himself as *the Amen, the Witness faithful and true, the Beginning of the creation of God.*[2] The first of these appellations is no doubt derived from Isa. lxv. 16, where we have twice repeated in the same verse the formula "God Amen;" and the meaning of the name as applied to Jesus is, not that all the Divine promises shall be accomplished by Him, but that He is Himself the fulfilment of every promise made by the Almighty to His people. The second appellation reminds us of John xviii. 37, where Jesus replies to Pilate's question in the words, "To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." His whole mission is summed up by Him in the idea of "witnessing." He is the perfect, the true, the real Witness to eternal truth in its deepest sense, in its widest and most comprehensive range. The third appellation, again, cannot be limited to the thought of the mere material creation, as it

[1] Chap. ii. 1. [2] Chap. iii. 14.

equivalent to the statement that by the Word were all things made. It would thus fail to correspond with the two appellations preceding it, which undoubtedly apply to the work of redemption, while at the same time the addition of the words "of God" would be meaningless or perplexing. Let us add to this that in chap. i. 5, immediately after Jesus has been called the "faithful Witness," He is described as the "first-begotten of the dead," and we shall not be able to resist the conviction that the words before us refer primarily to the new creation, the Christian Church, that redeemed humanity which has its true life in Christ. It may not indeed be necessary to exclude the thought of the material universe; but, in so far as it is alluded to, it is only as redeemed, in its ideal condition of rest and glory, when the new Jerusalem has come down out of heaven, and when the Church's enemies have been cast into the lake of fire.[1] The three appellations, it will be observed, have thus a general rather than a special aspect; and the salutation containing them is to be distinguished from the salutations of the other epistles, all of which, with the exception of the last, exhibit the closest possible connexion with the contents of the epistles to which they respectively belong. It is no mere fancy, therefore, when we say that we have in this a proof that the first and last epistles are not simply members of a continuous series, the last of which may leave the first far behind, but that they are binding terms which gather up all the members of the series and group them into one.

(7) It ought to be noticed that all the cities to which

[1] Comp. Rom. viii. 21, 22; James i. 18.

the seven epistles are addressed were situated beyond the boundaries of the Holy Land, and that the Christian Church in each was certainly composed, at least in large measure, of Gentile converts. These churches cannot therefore represent the Jewish Church alone, but must embody that wider idea of the Christian Church which was brought in when the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles was broken down, and when both were reconciled in one body by the Cross, becoming one Church in the Son and in the Father. Were we dealing with the Jewish-Christian Church, we should unquestionably find it located in Jerusalem or in some of the cities of Palestine. When we are taken to heathen soil, and to churches known to have been at least for the most part Gentile, it is a proof that we have before us that great Gentile Church in the very conception of which lies the thought of universality.

(8) The view now taken is confirmed by the general nature of the Apocalypse. That book is symbolical. It begins with a symbolical representation in the first chapter. Symbolism, by the admission of all, is resumed in the fourth chapter, and is continued from that point to the end. Now it is certainly possible that between these two groups of symbols a passage only strictly historical might be introduced. But if there be reason on independent grounds to think that here also we have facts used at least to a certain extent to serve a higher than a simply historic thought, it cannot fail to be allowed that the general unity of the book is thus preserved, and that a completeness is lent to it which we are entitled to expect, but which would be otherwise wanting.

The seven churches then of chaps. ii. and iii. are

thus intended to represent the one universal Church. The Seer selects such particular churches of Asia and such special features of their condition as afford the best illustration of that state of God's kingdom in the world which is to be the great subject of his prophetic words. He is to keep in view throughout all his revelation certain aspects of the Church in herself and in her relation to the world. But these aspects were not merely in the bosom of the future. Still less are they an ideal picture drawn from the resources of the writer's own imagination. To his enlightened eye, looking abroad over that part of the world in which his lot was cast, they were also present, one in one church, another in another. St. John therefore groups them together. They are "the things which are," and they are types of "the things which shall come to pass hereafter."[1]

The universalism of the Apocalypse is from the first apparent.

2. A second characteristic of the epistles addressed to the seven churches demands our notice, for these epistles are clearly divisible into two portions, the first consisting of the first three, the second of the other four. Every inquirer admits the fact, the proof resting upon the difference of place assigned in the two portions to the call, *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.* In the first three this call comes in as a central part of the epistle, immediately before the promise to *him that overcometh*[2]; in the last four it closes the epistle.[3] There is a still more interesting difference, though the Authorised English Version conceals it from view. According to the best attested

[1] Chap. i. 19.
[2] Chap. ii. 7, 11, 17.
[3] Chaps. ii. 29; iii. 6, 13, 22.

readings of the original, the second and third epistles—those to Smyrna and Pergamum—omit the words, found in all the others, *I know thy works.* The circumstance is at least remarkable, and it seems to admit of only one explanation. In the mind of the writer the first three epistles were so closely associated together—more closely perhaps than even the seven or the last four—that these words occurring in the first epistle were thought by him to extend their influence over the second and third, much in the same way as the description of the exalted Lord in the same epistle sent its voice forward, and that in the last epistle its voice backward, through the rest. At all events, it is impossible not to see that the first three epistles and likewise the last four, to whatever extent they form parts of one whole, constitute in each case a special unity. What, we have now to ask, is the ground of the distinction? In what light is the Church viewed in each of the two portions spoken of?

There are two aspects of the Church which may be said to pervade the whole Apocalypse: first, as she is in herself, in her own true nature; and secondly, as she is engaged in, and affected by, a struggle with the world. The distinction between the two may be traced in the grouping of which we speak. The first three epistles lead us to the thought of the Church in the former, the remaining four to the thought of her in the latter, aspect. In the first three she is the pure bride of Christ; in the last four she has yielded to the influences of the world, and the faithful remnant within her is separated from her professing but unfaithful members.

The numbers into which the two portions of the seven epistles are distributed illustrate this. Three

is the number of the Divine; four, as appears from many passages of this book, is the number of the world. The simple fact that we have a group of three as distinguished from one of four epistles is sufficient to lead to the impression that, in one way or another the thought of the Divine is more closely associated with the former, and the thought of the world with the latter.

This impression is confirmed when we look at the contents of the epistles. Let us take the first three, and we shall find that in not one of them is a contrast drawn between the whole Church and any faithful remnant within her borders, that in not one of them is the Church represented as yielding to the influences of the world. No doubt she has evil in her midst; and evil always springs from the world, not from God. But she is not yet conscious of the sin by which she is surrounded. She has not yet begun to traffic with the world, to accommodate herself to it, or to lust after what it bestows. The great charge against the church in Ephesus is that she has left her first love.[1] She has passed out of the bright and joyous feelings which marked the time of her espousals to the heavenly Bridegroom. But from sin the Church as she actually exists in the world can never be wholly free; and, so far in particular as the Nicolaitans are concerned, she shares in Ephesus the feelings of her Lord, and views them with the hatred which they deserve. No reproach is directed against the church in Smyrna. She is rather the object of her Lord's perfect confidence; and He is only preparing trial for her in correspondence with the

[1] Chap. ii. 4.

law by which He trains His people: "Every branch that beareth fruit, He cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit."[1] Remarks of a similar kind apply to the church in Pergamum. There is no charge against the church there that she is allowing the world to gain dominion over her. She has certainly persons in her midst who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans, but they are few in number; they are no more than "some,"[2] and she lends them no countenance. On the contrary, though dwelling in the place where Satan has his throne, she has remained true to her Lord, and has been purified in the fires of persecution then raging even unto death. In none of the three cases is the church perfect, but in none is she really faithless to her trust. She is in danger; she needs to be perfected by suffering[3]; by suffering she is perfected: but she knows that he who will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God, and the enemies of God are her enemies.

When we turn to the second group of the seven epistles, we at once breathe a different atmosphere; and the contrast is rendered more striking by the fact that in the first of the four we have the very sins spoken of which have already twice crossed our path in the epistles to Ephesus and to Pergamum. According to the best critical reading of chap. ii. 20, the charge against Thyatira is, "*Thou sufferest*" (Thou lettest alone; thou toleratest) "*thy wife Jezebel.*" Jezebel was a heathen princess, the first heathen queen who had been married by a king of the northern kingdom of Israel. She was therefore peculiarly fitted to represent the influences of the world; and the charge against Thyatira is thus

[1] John xv. 2. [2] Chap. ii. 14, 15. [3] Comp. Heb. ii. 10.

that, in the persons not of a few only, but of her united membership, she tolerated the world, with its heathen thoughts and practices. She knew it to be the world that it was; but notwithstanding this she was content to be at peace, or even to ally herself, with it. The church in Sardis is not less blameable. There are a few names in her that have not defiled their garments; but the church *as a whole* has deeply sinned. She has reproduced the Pharisaic type with which the Gospels have made us acquainted, substituting the outward for the inward in religion, and then yielding to the sins of the flesh to which she has thus given the supremacy. The church in Philadelphia, like that in Smyrna, is not blamed, and it is well that there should be one church even in the midst of the world of which this can be said; yet even Philadelphia has only *a little power*,[1] while the exhortation, *Hold fast that which thou hast*,[2] appears to indicate that she has been losing much. Lastly, no one can mistake the willing identification of herself with the world on the part of the church in Laodicea. She says that she is *rich*, that she has *gotten riches*, that she has *need of nothing*.[3] Her members are well-to-do and in easy circumstances, and they have found so much comfort in their worldly goods that they have become blind to the fact that man needs something better and higher for his portion. In all these four churches, in short, we have an entirely different relation between the Church and the world from that set before us in the first three. There is not simply danger of decay within, and the need of trial with the benefit resulting from it. There is actual conflict with the world; sometimes, it may be, a victory

[1] Chap. iii. 8. [2] Chap. iii. 11. [3] Chap. iii. 17.

over it, at other times a yielding to its influences and an adoption of its spirit. In the first three churches all, or all with few exceptions, are on the side of Christ; in the last four the "remnant" alone is true to Him.

Attention to the promises *to him that overcometh* in the different epistles seems to confirm what has been said. There is a marked contrast between the tone of these promises as they are given in the two groups of epistles; and even where a certain amount of similarity exists, the promises in the second group will be found to be fuller and richer than in the first. At Ephesus, at Smyrna, and at Pergamum "he that overcometh" is rewarded much, as one still in a simple and childlike state would be. The first promise made to him is that he shall *eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God*[1]; the second, that he shall *not be hurt of the second death*[2]; the third, that he shall *eat of the hidden manna*, and be like the high-priest in the innermost recesses of the sanctuary.[3] All is quiet. The appeal of Him who promises is to the gentler susceptibilities of the soul. The privileges and enjoyments spoken of are adapted to the condition of those who have not yet experienced the struggle of life.

When we turn to the second group of epistles there is a different tone. We enter upon rewards conceived in bolder and more manly figures. The first promise now is, *He that overcometh, and he that keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: and as a shepherd he shall tend them with a sceptre of iron; as the vessels of the potter are they broken to shivers.*[4] This is the reward of victory after well-fought fields. The

[1] Chap. ii. 7.
[2] Chap. ii. 11.
[3] Chap. ii. 17.
[4] Chap. ii. 26, 27.

warrior thus crowned must have braved the strife and won with difficulty. The second promise is not less marked in its character. *He that overcometh* shall not simply, as in the case of Smyrna, receive the reward of not being "hurt of the second death;" he shall be *arrayed in white garments*, and Jesus will *confess his name before His Father, and before His angels.* The third promise is at least a large extension of that given to Pergamum, for of *him that* now *overcometh* it is said, *I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall come no more forth*—that is, shall come no more forth to a struggle with the world similar to that in which he has been engaged—*and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My Goa, and Mine own new name.*[1] Finally, the fourth promise is the noblest of all: *He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with Me in My throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne.*[2] All the promises of the second group of epistles are clearly distinguished in tone and spirit from those of the first group. They presuppose a fiercer struggle, a hotter conflict; and they are therefore full of a more glorious reward.

Such seems to be the relation to one another of the two groups into which the seven epistles naturally divide themselves. In the first group the Church has stood firm against the world. She is full of toil and endurance; in her poverty she is rich; and the troubles of the future she does not fear. She holds fast the name of Christ, and openly confesses Him. Seeds of evil are indeed within her, which will too

[1] Chap. iii. 5. [2] Chap. iii. 12. [3] Chap. iii. 21.

soon develop themselves; but she has the Divine life within her in as much perfection as can be expected amidst the infirmities of our present state. She walks with God and hears His voice in her earthly paradise. In the second group the evil seed sown by the enemy has sprung up. The Church tolerates the sins that are around her, makes her league with the world, and yields to its influence. She rallies indeed at times to her new and higher life, but she finally submits to the world and is satisfied with its goods. There are many faithful ones, it is true, in her midst. As in the Jewish Church there was a "remnant according to the election of grace," so in her there are those who listen to the Saviour's voice and follow Him. Yet they are the smaller portion of her members, and they shall eventually come forth out of her. It is the same sad story which has marked all the previous dispensations of the Almighty with His people, and which will continue to be repeated until the Second Coming of the Lord. That story culminates in this book of the Revelation of St. John, when the bride, allying herself with the world, becomes a harlot, and when the Seer hears "another voice out of heaven, saying, Come forth, My people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."[1]

We have considered the epistles contained in these chapters as a unity representative of the universal Church in the two main aspects of her condition in the world; but before leaving them it will be well to look at them individually, and to mark the peculiar condition of each Church addressed.

[1] Chap. xviii. 4.

1. The first epistle is that to Ephesus, the central or metropolitan city of the district to which all the seven churches belonged, and with which the almost unanimous voice of antiquity associates the later years of the pastorate of St. John himself. Hence, in part at least, as we have already seen, the general nature of the salutation with which the glorified Lord presents Himself to that church. He does not merely hold its star in His right hand, nor does He merely walk in the midst of it alone. *He holdeth the seven stars in His right hand. He walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.* He is present in every part of His Church on earth. To every part of it He says, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the consummation of the age."[1]

The church at Ephesus is faithful as a whole. *I know,* is the language of her Lord to her, *thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them which call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false; and thou hast patience and didst bear for My name's sake, and hast not grown weary.* The tribute is a noble one. The church is not only working, but toiling, in her Master's service; she is firm amidst trial, whether from within or from without; she views with abhorrence all workers of iniquity; she tries, only in order to reject, those pretended messengers of Christ who would have preached another gospel than that the power of which she knew. Amidst all the speciousness of their claims, she had "found" them false. Then she turned again to her steadfast endurance until it became a settled principle in her life, and it could be said to her, with

[1] Matt. xxviii. 20.

the strong force of the word in the writings of St. John, that she "had" it. The spirit of all this, too, had been found in the "name" of Jesus, the revelation of the love and grace of God given her in Him. Finally, she had not grown weary. Seven marks of faithfulness appear to be mentioned; and, if so, the fourth—her judgment of false teachers—occupies the central position. Nor does it seem fanciful to say this when we notice that of all the seven points the fourth is the only one returned to, and that in a more specific form, at a later point in the epistle: *But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.* In other words, doctrinal faithfulness was the peculiar distinction of the Ephesian church. She knew that the revelation of God in Christ must be kept pure, or toil would lose its spring, patience its encouragement, shrinking from evil men its intensity, and perseverance its support. Therefore she valued the doctrinal truth which had been committed to her, and held fast the "form of sound words" which she had received, for the sake of the life to which it led.

Amidst all this the church at Ephesus was not wholly what she *ought* to have been. *I have this against thee,* had to be said to her, *that thou didst leave thy first love;* and she needed words of exhortation and warning: *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent.* The church had declined from the bright and joyous feelings of her first condition. Might her very zeal for the purity of Christian doctrine have had anything to do with this? It is not impossible. Eager defence of truth against error, notwithstanding its importance, is apt to shift the centre of the soul's inner

life. The strifes of theologians and the cry "First purity, then peace," translated into "Purity without peace," have been in every age the scandal and the weakness of the Church. Well might even David speak of it as one of the most signal instances of God's goodness to them that fear Him, "Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues;"[1] and never, alas! have tongues been sharper or more contentious than in the maintenance of the faith. There is something without which even zeal for truth may be but a scorching and devouring flame; and that is the "first love," the love ever fresh and tender for Him who first loved us, the love which teaches us to win and not to alienate, to raise and not to crush, those who may only be mistaken in their views, and are not determined enemies of God.

Possessed of this spirit, we shall *overcome;* and the first love will meet its first reward. *To him that overcometh,* says the Lord, recalling the blessedness of Eden, *will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.*

2. The second epistle is that to Smyrna, a rich, prosperous, and dissolute city, and largely inhabited by Jews bitterly opposed to Christ and Christianity. Here therefore persecution of those leading the pure and holy life of the Gospel might be peculiarly expected, as indeed it also peculiarly appeared. The church at Smyrna thus becomes the type of a suffering church, the representative of that condition of things foretold in the words of Christ, and constantly fulfilled in the history of His people, "A servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you."[2]

[1] Ps. xxxi. 20. [2] John xv 20.

It will be observed that at Smyrna the church is still faithful, and that against her no word of reproach is uttered. Hence the aspect under which the Redeemer presents Himself to that church is purely animating and consolatory, the same as that which, in the introductory vision in chap. i., followed the action of the Lord when He laid His right hand upon the Apostle, who had fallen to the ground as dead, and when He said to him, "Fear not."[1] So now: *These things saith the first and the last, which became dead, and lived again.* Death and resurrection are the two great divisions of the work of Christ on our behalf, and the Gospel is summed up in them. Just as St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians when he would remind them of the substance of his preaching in their midst, "For I declared unto you first of all that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,"[2] in like manner here the same two facts include all the truth which Smyrna held fast, and with which come the life that conquers sin and the joy that triumphs over sorrow.

The state of the church is then described: *I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty* (*but thou art rich*), *and the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.* Tribulation, persecution, the blasphemy of men calling themselves the only people of God and denying to Christians any portion in His covenant, are alone alluded to, though the church is at the same time cheered with the remark that if she had no share in worldly wealth

[1] Chap. i. 17 [2] 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.

and splendour, she was *rich*. "God had chosen them that were poor as to the world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to them that love Him."[1]

The church then was in the midst of suffering. Was not that enough; and shall she not be told that her sufferings were drawing to an end, that the night of weeping was gone by, and that the morning of joy was about to dawn? So we might think; but God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways, and we are like children bathing on the shore,

> Buried a wave beneath;
> The second wave succeeds before
> We have had time to breathe.

How often does it happen in the Christian's experience that one burden is laid upon another, and that one wave succeeds another, till he seems left desolate and alone upon the earth. Yet even then he has no assurance that his sufferings are at a close. The consolation afforded to him is, not that there shall be a short campaign, but only that, whether long or short, he shall be more than conqueror through Him that loved him. Thus our Lord does not now say to His church at Smyrna, Fear none of those things that thou art suffering, but *Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days.* It is hardly necessary to say to any intelligent reader of the Apocalypse that the "ten days" here spoken of are neither ten literal days, nor ten years, nor ten successive persecutions of indefinite

[1] James ii. 5.

length. In conformity with the symbolical use of numbers in this book, "ten days" expresses no more than a time which, though troubled, shall be definite and short, a time which may be otherwise denoted by the language of St. Peter when he says of believers that "now for *a little while* they have been put to grief in manifold temptations."[1] Encompassed by affliction, therefore, those who are thus tried have only to be *faithful unto death*, or to the last extremity of martyrdom. He who died and lived again will bestow upon them *the crown of life*, the crown of the kingdom, incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading. *He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.*

3. The third epistle is that to Pergamum, a city at the time devoted to the worship of Æsculapius, the god of medicine, and in particular largely engaged with those parts of medical science which are occupied with inquiries into the springs of life. That the wickedness of the city was both greater and more widespread than was common even in the dark days of heathenism is borne witness to by the fact that the first words addressed to it by Him *that hath the sharp two-edged sword* were these: *I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is.* The word "throne" (not, as in the Authorised Version, "seat") is intentionally selected by the Seer; and its use affords an illustration of one of his principles of style, the remembrance of which is not unfrequently of value in interpreting his book. Everywhere it is his wont to see over against the good its mocking counterpart of evil, over against the light a corresponding darkness. Thus because God occupies a throne Satan does the same;

[1] 1 Pet. i. 6.

and inasmuch as in Pergamum sin was marked by a refinement of greater than ordinary depth, Satan might be said to have his "throne" there. This circumstance, combined with the promise to the Church contained in the seventeenth verse, *To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it*, may help us to understand the main thought of this epistle as distinguished from the others. We have seen reason to believe that there was some secret mystery of evil in the city; and, contrasted with this, we have now the promise of a secret mystery of life to the faithful church. The Church then in the secret of her Divine preservation is here before us. She lives a life the springs of which no one sees, a life that is hid with Christ in God.

It will be observed, accordingly, that, whatever may be said against the condition of the city, nothing is said against the church within it. There is no hint that she has yielded to the influences of the world. She has certainly evil-doers in her midst; but these, though in her, are not of her: and the Christianity of the great majority of her members remains sound and sweet. Let us listen to the words of commendation: *And thou holdest fast My name, and didst not deny My faith, even in the days of Antipas My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner. Repent therefore; or else I*

come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. Those who are described in these words as "holding the teaching of Balaam" and those who are here called "the Nicolaitans" are the same, denoted in the first instance by a description taken from the history of Balaam in the Old Testament, and in the second by a word formed in Greek after the fashion of Balaam's name in Hebrew. That the church in her corporate capacity had not yielded to the sinfulness referred to is manifest from this, that they who had done so are described as "some," and that in the threatening of the sixteenth verse it is not said, I will war against "thee," but I will war against "them." The sin therefore found in the bosom of the church was not, as we shall find it to have been at Thyatira, with her consent. She failed, not because she encouraged it, but because she did not take more vigorous steps for its extinction. She did not sufficiently realize the fact that she was a part of the Body of Christ, and that, if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. Believers in her community were too easily satisfied with working out their own salvation, and thought too little of presenting the whole church "as a pure virgin to Christ."[1] Therefore it was that, even amidst much faithfulness, they needed to repent, to feel more deeply than they did that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump,"[2] and that in the Church of the Lord Jesus we are to a large extent responsible, not only for our own, but for our neighbours', sins. By keeping up the Christian tone of the whole Church the tone of each member of the Church is heightened.

We thus reach the close of the first three epistles

[1] 2 Cor. xi. 2. [2] 1 Cor. v. 6.

"to the churches;" and we see that, while each is accommodated to the particular circumstances of the Christian community to which it is sent, the three taken together present to us the three leading considerations upon which, when we think of Christ's Church in this world, we naturally dwell. First, she is in the main true to her Divine Master, even when compelled to confess that she has left her first love. Secondly, she is exposed for her further cleansing to many trials. Lastly, she is sustained by the unseen influences of Divine love and grace. She eats of the hidden manna. She has within her breastplate a white, glistering stone, upon which is inscribed the new name which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. She dwells, like the high-priest of old at the moment of his greatest dignity and honour, in the secret place of the Most High. She abides under the shadow of the Almighty. As a child she has entered into the garden of the Lord; and yet, in all the simplicity of her childhood, she is both king and priest.

Such is the Church of Christ in Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum. Happy days of innocence and bliss! We may well linger over them for a little. Too soon will they pass away, and too soon will the Church's conflict with the world and her yielding to it begin.

4. With the fourth epistle we enter upon the second group of epistles, where the Church is brought before us less as she is in herself, than as she fails to maintain her true position in the world, and as that separation between a faithful remnant and the whole body which meets us at every step of her history, throughout both the Old Testament and the New,

begins to show itself. Now therefore there is a change of tone.

The first of the four, the fourth in the series of seven, is that to Thyatira; and to the church there the Lord presents Himself in all the penetrating power of those eyes that as a flame of fire search the inmost recesses of the heart, and in all the resistless might of those feet that are as "pillars of fire:"[1] *These things saith the Son of God, who hath His eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like unto burnished brass.*

The commendation of the church follows, what is good being noted before defects are spoken of: *I know thy works, and thy love and faith and ministry and patience, and that thy last works are more than the first.* The commendation is great. There was not only grace, but growth in grace, not only work, but work in Christ's cause abounding more and more. Yet there was also failure. To understand this it is necessary, as already noticed, to adopt the translation of the Revised Version, founded on the more correct reading of the later critical editions of the Greek. Even in that version, too, the translation, given in the margin, of one important expression has to be substituted for that of the text. Keeping this in view, the Saviour thus addresses Thyatira: *But I have this against thee, that thou sufferest* (that thou toleratest, that thou lettest alone) *thy wife Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and seduceth My servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time that she should repent; and she willeth not to repent of her fornication. Behold, I do cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery*

[1] Chap. x. 1.

with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto each one of you according to your works. In these words "Jezebel" is clearly a symbolical name. It is impossible to think that the "angel" of the church was the chief pastor, and that the woman named Jezebel, spoken of as she is, was his wife. We have before us the notorious Jezebel of Old Testament history. Her story is so familiar to every one that it is unnecessary to dwell on it; and we need only further call attention to the fact that the sentence in which her name is mentioned is complete in itself. The sin of the church at Thyatira was that she "suffered" her. In other words, the church tolerated in her midst the evil of which Ahab's wife was so striking a representative. She knew the world to be what it was; but, instead of making a determined effort to resist it, she yielded to its influences. She repeated the sin of the Corinthian Church: "It is actually reported that there is fornication among you. . . . And ye are puffed up, and did not rather mourn, that he that had done this deed might be taken away from among you."[1] The world, in short, was in the church, and was tolerated there. Of the threatened punishment, the "bed" of tribulation and sorrow instead of that of guilty pleasure, nothing need be said. It is of more consequence to observe the change in the manner of address which meets us after that punishment has been described: *But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, which know not the deep things*

[1] 1 Cor. v. 1, 2.

of Satan, as they say; I cast upon you none other burden. Howbeit that which ye have, hold fast till I come. For the first time in these epistles we meet with those who are spoken of as "the rest," the remnant, who are to be carefully distinguished from the great body of the Church's professing members. The world has penetrated into the Church; the Church has become conformed to the world: and the hour is rapidly approaching when the true disciples of Jesus will no longer find within her the shelter which she has hitherto afforded them, and when they will have to "come forth out of her" in her degenerate condition.[1] It is a striking feature of these apocalyptic visions, which has been too much missed by commentators. We shall meet it again and again as we proceed. In the meantime it is enough to say that the moment of withdrawal has not yet come. The faithful "rest," who had rejected the false teaching and shunned the sinful life, are to continue where they were; and the Lord will *cast upon them none other burden.* Well for them that they had such a promise! Their burden of suffering was heavy enough already. Hard to contend with under any circumstances, suffering rises nearer to the height of the sufferings of Christ when the Christian is "wounded," not by open foes, but "in the house of his friends." "It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou, a man mine equal, my companion, and my familiar friend. We took sweet counsel together; we walked in the house of God with the throng."[2]

[1] Comp. chap. xviii. 4.

[2] Ps. lv. 12–14.

The trial was great; so also is the consolation: *And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: and as a shepherd he shall tend them with a sceptre of iron, as the vessels of the potter are they broken to shivers; as I also have received of My Father: and I will give him the morning star.* It was a heathen element that clouded the sky of the church at Thyatira. That element, nay *the nations* out of which it springs, shall be crushed beneath the iron sceptre of the King who shall "reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously."[1] The clouds shall disappear; and Jesus, "the bright, the morning star,"[2] having given Himself to His people, He and they together shall shine with its clear but peaceful light when it appears in the heavens, the harbinger of day.

5. The fifth epistle is that to Sardis, and in the superscription He who sends it describes Himself as One *that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.* Both expressions have already met us, the former in chap. i. 4, the latter in chap. ii. 1. A different word from that used in the address to Ephesus is indeed used here to indicate the relation of the Lord to these stars or angels of the churches. There the glorified Lord "holdeth the seven stars in His right hand;" here He "hath" them. Like every other change, even of the slightest kind, in this book, the difference is instructive. To "hold" them is to hold them fast for their protection; to "have" them is to have them for a possession, to have them not only outwardly and in name, but inwardly and in reality, as His own. Thus Christ "hath" the Holy Spirit, who in all His varied

[1] Isa. xxiv. 23. [2] Chap. xxii. 16.

or sevenfold influences is, as He proceedeth from the Father and the Son, not only God's, but His. Thus also Christ "hath" the seven stars or churches, here spoken of in immediate connexion with the Spirit, and therefore viewed chiefly in that spirituality of feeling and of life which ought to be the great mark distinguishing them from the world. It was the mark in which Sardis failed. Let her take heed to Him with whom she has to do.

I know, are the words addressed to her, *thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead. Be thou watchful, and stablish the things that remain, which were ready to die: for I have found no works of thine fulfilled before My God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and didst hear; and keep it, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.* The world had been tolerated in Thyatira, the first of the last four churches; in Sardis, the second, it is more than tolerated. Sardis has substituted the outward for the inward. She has been proud of her external ordinances, and has thought more of them than of living in the Spirit and walking in the Spirit. True piety has declined; and, as a natural consequence, sins of the flesh, alluded to in the immediately following words of the epistle, have asserted their supremacy. More even than this, Sardis had a *name* that she lived while she was dead. She was renowned among men. The world looked, and beheld with admiration what was to it the splendour of her worship; it listened, and heard with enthusiasm the music of her praise. And the church was pleased that it should be so. Not in humility, lowliness, and deeds of self-sacrificing love did she seek her "name," but in what the world would

have been equally delighted with though the inspiring soul of it all had been folly or sin. A stronghold had been established by the world in Sardis.

Yet there also the Good Shepherd had His little flock, and there again we meet them. *But thou hast a few names in Sardis which did not defile their garments.* These were to Sardis what "the rest" were to Thyatira. They were the "gleanings left in Israel, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost branches of a fruitful tree."[1] They were the "new wine found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it."[2] To them therefore great promises are given: *They shall walk with Me in white; for they are worthy. He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.* It is the glorified Lord who, as the High-priest of His Church, "walketh" in the midst of the golden candlesticks; and, as priests, these shall *walk with* Him in a similar glory. Upon earth they were despised, but beyond the earth they shall be openly acknowledged and vindicated. They shall be arrayed in those garments of glistering purity which were with difficulty kept white in the world, but which in the world to come Divine favour shall keep free from every stain.

6. The sixth epistle is to Philadelphia; and the remarkable circumstance connected with this church is that, though spoken of as having but "a little power," it is not seriously blamed. In this respect it resembles the church at Smyrna in the first group of

[1] Isa. xvii. 6. [2] Isa. lxv. 8.

these seven epistles. What has mainly to be noticed, however, is that it is not simply, like that at Smyrna, a suffering church. It has been engaged in an earnest and hot struggle with the world, as the superscription, the commendation, and the promises of the epistle combine to testify.

The superscription is, *These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and none shall shut, and that shutteth, and none openeth.* The figure is taken from the Old Testament; and both there and here the context shows us that it is neither the key of knowledge, nor the key of discipline, nor the key of the treasures of the kingdom that is spoken of, but the key of power to open the Lord's house as a sure refuge from all evil, and to preserve safe for ever those who are admitted to it. "I will call My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah," says the Almighty by His prophet, "and I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; and he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open."[1] Whoever be our adversaries, we know that in the hollow of the Lord's hand we are safe.

The commendation of the epistle tells the same tale: *I know thy works* (*behold, I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut*), *that thou hast a little power, and didst keep My word, and didst not deny My name.* The Church had "a little power," and she had shown this in the struggle.

[1] Isa. xxii. 21, 22.

So also with the promises: *Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them which say they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou didst keep the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole inhabited earth, to try them that dwell upon the earth. I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown. He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall no more come forth: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God, and Mine own new name.* How fierce the struggle of Philadelphia had been with the world we learn from these words, in which the enemies of the Church—"Jews" they call themselves, the people of God, but "they are not" —are brought before us like vanquished nations at her feet, as she sits in the heavenly places, paying homage to her against whom they had so long, but vainly, struggled. It is impossible not to see the difference between this church and that at Smyrna. No doubt there had been "blasphemy of them which say they are Jews" in the latter case, but worse trials were only spoken of as about to come. Here the trials have come, and the church has risen triumphantly above them. Therefore will the Lord admit her to His heavenly mansions, and will make her a pillar in His Father's house, whence she shall come forth no more. He Himself "went forth" from His Father that He might be the Captain of our salvation and might die on our behalf. He returned to His Father, and never again "comes forth" as He came in the days

of His flesh. Having died once, He dieth no more; and they who have borne His cross shall wear, when victors in His cause, His crown of victory.

7. The seventh epistle is to Laodicea, and here there can be no doubt that we have the picture of a church in which the power of the world carries almost all before it. The church is addressed by Him who describes Himself as *the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God*, upon which immediately follows a charge as to her condition in which there is no redeeming point. Only later do we see that there is hope. *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of My mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one, and miserable and poor and blind and naked: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich; and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.* To interpret the boasting of the church given in these words as if it referred to spiritual rather than material riches is entirely to mistake the meaning. Worldly wealth is in the writer's view. The members of the church generally have aimed at riches, and have gotten them. Possession of riches has also been followed by its usual effects. The seen and the temporal have usurped in their minds the place of the unseen and the eternal. Perhaps they have even regarded their worldly prosperity as a token of the Divine favour, and are

soothing themselves with the reflection that they have made the best of both worlds, when they have really sacrificed everything to one world, and that the lower of the two. The last picture of the Church is the saddest of all.

Yet is Laodicea not altogether without hope. *Behold,* says He whose every word is truth, *I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.* Even in Laodicea there are some who, inasmuch as they have fought the hardest battle, shall be welcomed to the highest reward. *He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with Me in My throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne.* Beyond that neither hope nor imagination can rise.

The epistles to the seven churches are over. They present the Church to us as she appears on the field of history. They set before us the leading characteristics of her condition partly as she was in "Asia" at the moment when the Apostle wrote, partly as she shall be throughout all time and on the widest, as well as the narrowest, scale. These characteristics may be shortly summed up as—in the first group of three, love to the Redeemer, yet love liable, and even beginning, to grow cold; persecution and trials of many kinds; preservation by the secret grace of God and in the hidden life: in the second group of four, yielding on the part of the majority to sins associated with unchristian doctrine; formalism in religion; weakness in the midst of trial, even though not accompanied by faithlessness; and lukewarmness, springing from a preference of the things of time to those of eternity. To these characteristics, however, have to

be added, as more or less accompanying them, many of the active graces of the Christian life: labour, and patience, and faith, and charity, and works, whatever makes the Christian Church a light in the world and the object of her Lord's care and watchfulness. In reading the seven epistles, we behold a lively picture of the Church of Christ in her graces and in her failings, in her strength and in her weakness, in her joys and in her sorrows, in her falls under the influence of temptation and in her returns to the path of duty. The characteristics thus spoken of are not peculiar to any particular age, but may mark her at one time less, at another more, at one time individually, at another in combination. Taken as a whole, they present her to us in her Divine ideal marred by human blemishes; we are prepared to acknowledge the necessity, the wisdom, and the mercy of the trials that await her; and we learn to anticipate with gladness her final and glorious deliverance.

One brief concluding remark ought to be made. The epistles now considered ought to be sufficient in themselves to show that the Apocalypse is not a series of visions intended only to illustrate one or two ideas which had taken a strong hold of the Apostle's mind, or one or two great principles of the Divine government in general. St. John starts from the realities around him as much as any writer of the New Testament. It is true that he sees in them *eternal* principles at work, and that he rises to the thought of ideal good and of ideal evil; but he is not on that account less true to fact, less impressed by fact. On the contrary, his very depth of insight into the meaning of the facts makes him what he is. He who would write a philosophy of history is not less, but more, dependent

upon the facts of history than he to whom a fact is valuable simply in its individual and isolated form. It is *the present* therefore that stirs the writer of this book, but stirs him the more because he beholds in it principles and issues connected with Him who was, and is, and is to come, the covenant-keeping God, the Judge of *men*, the unchangeable I AM.

Hence also the mistake sometimes made of thinking that the purpose of unfolding the principles of the Divine government could not be a sufficient motive to St. John to write.[1] Every cruelty to the saints of God which he witnessed, every cry of oppression which he heard, supplied a motive. We may not feel these things now, but the iron of them entered into the soul of the disciple whom Jesus loved. We need more prophets like him to make it ring in the ears of selfish wealth and of ease indifferent to the ills festering around it, "For the spoiling of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord."[2]

[1] Dods, *Introduction to New Testament*, p. 244.
[2] Ps. xii. 5.

CHAPTER III.

ANTICIPATIONS OF THE CHURCH'S VICTORY.

Rev. iv., v.

WE have seen in considering the first chapter of the Apocalypse that the book as a whole is to be occupied with the Church's struggle in the world; and in the second and third chapters the Church herself has been placed before us as she occupies her position upon the field of history. But the struggle has not yet begun, nor will it begin until we reach the sixth chapter. Chaps. iv. and v. are therefore still to be regarded as in a certain measure introductory. They form a separate—the third—section of the book; and the first questions that meet us in connexion with them are, What is their relation to the main purpose of the author? What is their leading conception? and Why are they placed where they are?

In answering these questions, we are aided by the strictly parallel structure of the fourth Gospel. The Prologue of that book, contained in chap. i. 1-18, suggests the object which the writer has in view. The next section—chap. i. 19-ii. 11—places before us the Redeemer whose glory he is to describe. The struggle of the Son of God with the world does not begin till we come to chap. v. Between chap. ii. 12 and chap. iv. 54 there is thus a considerable interval, in which we have the cleansing of the Temple and the victory of Jesus over the unbelief of the Jew

Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, and the king's officer of Galilee, who was probably a Gentile. In this intervening space the leading thought seems to be that of victory, not indeed of victory *in* the struggle, but of victory which prepares us *for* it, and fills the mind with hope *before* it begins. In like manner the two chapters upon which we are about to enter are occupied with songs of victory. Catching their spirit, we shall boldly accompany the Church into the struggle which follows, and shall be animated by a joyful confidence that, whatever her outward fortunes, He that is with her is more than they that be with her enemies.[1]

While such is the general conception of the third and fourth chapters viewed as one, we have further to ask whether, subordinate to their united purpose, there is not a difference between them. Such a difference there appears to be; and words of our Lord in the fourth Gospel, spoken upon an occasion which had deeply impressed itself upon the mind of the Evangelist, may help us to determine what it is. In the fourteenth chapter of that Gospel Jesus encourages His Apostles as He sends them forth to fight His battle in the world. "Let not," He says, "your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in Me." The section of the Apocalypse upon which we are about to enter embraces a similar thought in both its parts. Chap. iv. conveys to the Church the assurance that He who is the ultimate source of all existence is on her side; chap. v. that she may depend upon Christ and His redeeming work. The two chapters taken together are a cry to the Church from her glorified Head, before she enters

[1] Comp. 2 Chron. xxxii. 7, 8.

into the tribulation that awaits her, "Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in Me."

After these things I saw and, behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard, a voice as of a trumpet speaking with me, one saying, Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must come to pass hereafter. Straightway I was in the Spirit: and, behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and One sitting upon the throne; and He that sat was to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon. And round about the throne were four-and-twenty thrones: and upon the thrones I saw four-and-twenty elders sitting, arrayed in white garments, and on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God (iv. 1-5).

The *first voice* here spoken of is the voice of chap. i. 10: "And I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet;" and it is well to remember that that voice introduced the vision of a Son of man who, while both King and Priest, was King and Priest in judgment. It is impossible to doubt that the sound of the same voice is intended to indicate the same thing here, and that the King whom we are about to behold is One who has "prepared His throne for judgment."[1]

The Seer is introduced to a scene which we first recognise as the glorious audience-chamber of a great King. Everything as yet speaks of royalty, and of royal majesty, power, and judgment. The *jasper stone* as we learn from a later passage of this book, in which it is said to be "clear as crystal,"[2] was of a bright, sparkling whiteness; and it fitly represents the holiness of Him of whom the seraphim in Isaiah cry one to another, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts,"[3] and

[1] Ps. ix. 7. [2] Chap. xxi. 11. [3] Isa. vi. 3.

who in this very chapter is celebrated by the unresting cherubim with the words, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord, God, the Almighty, which was and which is and which is to come." The *sardius*, again, was of a fiery red colour, and can denote nothing but the terror of the Almighty's wrath. *Out of the throne* also—not merely out of the atmosphere surrounding it, but out of the throne itself—*proceed lightnings and voices and thunders*, always throughout the Apocalypse emblems of judgment; while the use of the word *burn* in other parts of the same book, and the fact that what the Seer beheld was not so much lamps as torches, leads to the belief that these torches as they burned before the throne sent out a blazing and fierce rather than a calm and soft light. It is true that the *rainbow round about the throne* points to the Divine covenant of grace and promise, and that its *emerald* greenness, absorbing, or at least throwing into the shade, its other and varied hues, tells with peculiar force of something on which the eye loves, and does not fear, to rest. But the mercy of God does not extinguish His righteousness and judgment. Different as such qualities may seem to be, they are combined in Him with whom the Church and the world have to do. In the New Testament not less than in the Old the Almighty reveals Himself in the awakening terrors of His wrath as well as in the winning gentleness of His love. St. Peter speaks of our Lord as not only the chief corner-stone laid in Zion, elect, precious, so that he that believeth on Him shall not be put to shame, but as a stone of stumbling and rock of offence;[1] and when the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews gives us his loftiest description

[1] 1 Pet. ii. 6, 8.

of the privileges of the Christian Church, he closes it with the words, "Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: for our God is a consuming fire."[1] So also here. Would we conceive of God aright, even after we have been brought into the full enjoyment of all the riches of His grace and love, we must think of Him as represented by the jasper and the sardius as well as by the emerald.

The *four-and-twenty elders* occupying *thrones* (not seats) around the throne are to be regarded as representatives of the glorified Church; and the number, twice twelve, seems to be obtained by combining the number of the patriarchs of the Old Testament with that of the Apostles of the New.

The description of the heavenly scene is now continued:—

> And before the throne, as it were a glassy sea like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four living creatures full of eyes before and behind. And the first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face as of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, having each one of them six wings, are full of eyes round about and within; and they have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord, God, the Almighty, which was and which is and which is to come (iv. 6-8).

Up to this point we have been beholding a royal court; in the words now quoted the priestly element comes in. The *glassy sea* naturally leads the thoughts to the great brazen laver known as the brazen sea which stood in the court of Solomon's temple between

[1] Heb. xii. 28, 29.

the altar and the sanctuary, and at which the priests cleansed themselves before entering upon the discharge of their duties within the precincts of God's holy house. The resemblance is not indeed exact; and were it not for what follows, there might be little upon which to rest this supposition. We know, however, from many examples, that the Seer uses the figures of the Old Testament with great freedom; and as the Temple source of the *living creatures* next introduced to us cannot be mistaken, it becomes the more probable that the brazen sea of the same building, whatever be the actual meaning of the figure—a point that will meet us afterwards—suggests the "glassy sea."

When we turn to the "living creatures," there can be no doubt whatever that we are in the midst of Temple imagery. These are the cherubim, two of which, fashioned in gold, were placed above the mercy-seat in the holy of holies, so that, inasmuch as that mercy-seat was regarded as peculiarly the throne of God, Israel was invited to think of its King as "sitting between the cherubim."[1] These figures, however, were not confined to that particular spot, nor were they fashioned only in that particular way, for the curtain and the veil which formed the sides of the Most Holy Place were wrought with cherubim of cunning work,[2] so that one entering that sacred spot was surrounded by them. In the midst of the cherubim spoken of in these verses we are thus in the midst of Temple figures and of priestly thoughts. It is impossible here to trace the history of the cherubim throughout the Bible; and we must be content with referring to two points connected with them, of importance for the interpretation

[1] Ps. xcix. 1. [2] Exod. xxvi. 1.

of this book: the representative nature of the figures and the aspect under which we are to see them.[1]

As to the first of these, the human element in the cherubim is at once intelligible. It can be nothing but man; while the fact that they occupy so large a position in the most sacred division of the Tabernacle is sufficient to prove that man, so represented, is thought of as redeemed and brought to the highest stage of spiritual perfection. The other elements referred to certainly do not indicate either new qualities added to humanity, or an intensification of those already possessed by it, as if we might cherish the prospect of a time when the physical qualities of man shall equal in their strength those of the animals around him, when he shall possess the might of the lion, the power of the ox, and the swiftness of the eagle. They represent rather the different departments of nature as these are distributed into the animate and inanimate creation. Taking the "living creatures" together in all their parts, they are thus an emblem of man, associated on the one hand with the material creation, on the other with the various tribes of animals by which it is inhabited, but all redeemed, transfigured, perfected, delivered from the bondage of corruption, and brought into "the liberty of the glory of the children of God."[2] They have a still wider and more comprehensive meaning than the "twenty-four elders," the latter setting before us only the Church, but the former all creation, glorified.

The second point above mentioned—the aspect worn by the living creatures—demands also a few remarks,

[1] Comp. *Bible Educator*, vol. iii., p. 290, where the writer has discussed this subject at some length.

[2] Rom. viii. 21.

for the view commonly entertained upon it seems to be erroneous. Misled by the mention of the *calf*, which is supposed to be the ox, and not the bull-calf, interpreters have allowed the mode in which they understood this particular to rule their interpretation of the others. It has been regarded as the emblem of endurance and of patient labour rather than of power and rage; while, following the same line of thought, the *eagle* has been treated as the king of birds soaring in the blue vault of heaven rather than as hastening (like the vulture) to his prey.[1] The whole conception of the cherubim has thus been modified and shaped in the minds of men under a form altogether different from that in which it is really presented to us in Scripture. The cherubim of the Old Testament and the "living creatures" of the New are supposed to represent "majesty and peerless strength," "patient and productive industry," and "soaring energy and nimbleness of action." In reality they rather represent qualities that strike terror into the hearts of men and suggest the idea of an irresistibly destructive force. With this view all that is elsewhere said of them corresponds. They are not simply spoken of as partakers of the favour of God. They are instruments in the execution of His wrath. When our first parents were driven from the garden of Eden, they were placed "at the east of the garden," along with "a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."[2] When we are introduced to them in Ezekiel, it is said that "their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out

[1] Job ix. 26. [2] Gen. iii. 24.

of the fire went forth lightning. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning."[1] Similar associations are connected with them throughout the Apocalypse. The opening of each of the first four seals, the four that deal with judgments upon the earth, is immediately followed by a voice, "as it were the noise of thunder," from one of the four living creatures, saying, Come.[2] One of them gives to the seven angels "seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God."[3] And after the destruction of Babylon, when her smoke is ascending up for ever and ever, and the voice of much people in heaven calls for praise to Him who hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand, they "fall down and worship God that sitteth on the throne, saying, Amen; Hallelujah."[4] There can be little doubt, then, as to the meaning of these four living creatures. They are sharers of the Almighty's holiness, and of that holiness in its more awful form, as a holiness that cannot look on sin but with abhorrence. They are the vicegerents of His kingdom. They are assessors by His side. Their aspect is not that of the sweetness associated with the word "cherub," but that of sternness, indignant power, and judgment. Thus also it is that in the Tabernacle they looked toward the mercy-seat.[5] By what they saw there they were restrained from executing wrath upon the guilty. That mercy-seat, sprinkled with the blood of atonement, told them of pardon and of a new life for the sinner. Their sternness was softened; mercy rejoiced over judgment; and the storm-wind upon which God flew swiftly, when

[1] Ezek. i. 13, 14.
[2] Chap. vi. 1, 3, 5, 7.
[3] Chap. xv. 7.
[4] Chap. xix. 4.
[5] Exod. xxv. 20.

"He rode upon a cherub, and did fly,"[1] sank into a calm.

The Seer has beheld the audience-chamber of the Godhead in itself. He has seen also the Divine Being who is there clothed with majesty, and those who wait upon Him. He next passes to another thought:—

> And when the living creatures shall give glory and honour and thanks to Him that sitteth on the throne, to Him that liveth for ever and ever, the four-and-twenty elders shall fall down before Him that sitteth on the throne, and shall worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power: for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they were, and were created (iv. 9-11).

In his beautiful comments upon the Revelation Isaac Williams says, "The four living creatures, or the Church of the redeemed, give thanksgiving to God for their redemption; and then the twenty-four elders fall down and attribute all glory to God alone, inasmuch as prophets, Apostles, and all the ministering priesthood, rejoicing in the salvation of the elect, attribute it not to their own instrumentality, but to God."[2] In thus interpreting the passage, however, that commentator can hardly be regarded as correct. It is true that the living creatures are the representatives of redeemed creation, and the twenty-four elders representatives of the glorified Church. But in the song of praise here put into their mouths they have not yet advanced to the thought of salvation. That is reserved for the next chapter. Here they think of creation, with all its wonders; of the heavens which declare God's glory, and the firmament which shows

[1] Ps. xviii. 10.

[2] *The Apocalypse, with Notes and Reflections*, p. 69.

forth His handiwork; of sun, and moon, and stars in their manifold and resplendent glories; of the mountains and the valleys; of the rivers and the fountains of waters; of the rich exuberance of vegetable life, which covers the earth with a gorgeous carpet of every hue; and of all those animals upon its surface which "run races in their mirth:" and for them they praise. To God all creatures owe their origin. In Him they live, and move, and have their being. Because of His will they *were*—let the reading be considered and remembered: "were," not "are"—because of His will they were in His idea from eternity; and when the appointed moment came, they *were created*. Wherefore let them praise. We are reminded of the Psalms of the Old Testament, though it is ours to put into their words a still deeper and richer meaning than they possessed when first uttered by the Psalmist:—

Praise ye the Lord.
Praise ye the Lord from the heavens:
Praise Him in the heights.
Praise ye Him, all His angels:
Praise ye Him, all His host.
Praise ye Him, sun and moon
Praise Him, all ye stars of light.
Praise Him, ye heavens of heavens,
And ye waters that be above the heavens.
Let them praise the name of the Lord:
For He commanded, and they were created
He hath also established them for ever and ever:
He hath made a decree which shall not pass away.
Praise the Lord from the earth,
Ye dragons, and all deeps:
Fire, and hail; snow, and vapour;
Stormy wind fulfilling His word:
Mountains, and all hills;
Fruitful trees, and all cedars:
Beasts, and all cattle;

Creeping things, and flying fowl:
Kings of the earth, and all peoples;
Princes, and all judges of the earth:
Both young men, and maidens;
Old men, and children:
Let them praise the name of the Lord:
For His name alone is exalted;
His glory is above the earth and heaven.[1]

Such then in chap. iv. is the call addressed by the Seer to the Church before she enters upon her struggle, a call similar to that of Jesus to His disciples, "Believe in God."

The fifth chapter continues the same general subject, but with a reference to Christ the Redeemer rather than God the Creator:—

And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a roll of a book written within and on the back, close sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice, Who is worthy to open the roll, and to loose the seals thereof? And no one in the heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the roll, or to look thereon. And I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open the roll, or to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome to open the roll, and the seven seals thereof (v. 1-5).

We can easily form to ourselves a correct idea of the outward form of the symbol resorted to in these words. The same symbol is used by the prophet Ezekiel, and in circumstances in some respects precisely analogous to those of the Seer. Ezekiel had just beheld his first vision of the cherubim. "And when I looked," he says, "behold, an hand was put forth unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; and He spread it before me; and it was written within and without."[2] In both cases it is not a "book," but a *roll*, like the sacred rolls of

[1] Ps. cxlviii. 1-3. [2] Ezek. ii. 9, 10.

the synagogue, that is presented to the prophet's eye, the difference being that in the Apocalypse we read of the roll being *close sealed with seven seals.* This addition is due to the higher, more sublime, and more momentous nature of the mysteries contained in it. That it is *written within and on the back,* so that there is no space for further writing, shows that it contains the whole counsel of God with regard to the subject of which it treats. It is the word of Him who is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last; and the seven seals are so fastened to the roll that one of them may be broken at a time, and no more of the contents disclosed than belonged to that particular seal. What also the contents of the roll are we learn from the contents of the seals as they are successively disclosed in the following chapters. As yet the Seer does not know them. He knows only that they are of the deepest interest and importance; and he looks anxiously around to see if any one can be found who may break the seals and unfold their mysteries. No such person can be discovered either *in heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth.* No one will even dare to look upon the roll; and the sorrow of the Seer was so deepened by this circumstance that he *wept much.*

At that moment one of the elders, the representatives of the glorified Church, advanced to cheer him with the tidings that what he so much desired shall be accomplished. One who had had a battle to fight and a victory to win had *overcome,* not only to look upon the roll, but to *open it and to loose the seven seals thereof,* so as to make its contents known. This was *the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David.* The description is taken partly from the law and partly from the prophets, for is not this "He of whom Moses in the

law, and the prophets, did write"?[1]; the former in the blessings pronounced by the dying patriarch Jacob upon his son Judah: "Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as a lioness; who shall rouse him up?"[2]; the latter in such words as those of Isaiah, "And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a Branch out of his roots shall bear fruit;"[3] while, in the language alike of the prophet and of the Seer, the words set forth the Messiah, not as the root out of which David sprang, but as a shoot which, springing from him, was to grow up into a strong and stately tree. In Him the conquering might of David, the man of war, and of Judah, "chosen to be the ruler,"[4] comes forth with all the freshness of a new youth. He is "the mystery which hath been hid from all ages and generations, but now hath been manifested to the saints."[5] In Him "the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth."[6] "After two days will He revive us: on the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live before Him. And let us know, let us follow on to know, the Lord: His going forth is sure as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain that watereth the earth."[7] Thus then was it now. Like Daniel of old, the Seer had wept in order that he might understand the vision; and the elder said to him, *Weep not.*

The eagerly desired explanation follows:—

And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing as though

[1] John i. 45.
[2] Gen. xlix. 9.
[3] Isa. xi. 1.
[4] 1 Chron. xxviii. 4.
[5] Col. i. 26.
[6] 1 John ii. 8.
[7] Hos. vi. 2, 3.

it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And He came, and He hath taken it out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne (v. 6, 7).

A strange and unlooked-for spectacle is presented to the Seer. He had been told of a lion; and he beholds a lamb, nay not only a lamb, the emblem of patience and of innocence, but, as we learn from the use of the word *slaughtered* (not "slain," as in both the Authorised and Revised Versions), a lamb for sacrifice, and that had been sacrificed. Nor can we doubt for a moment, when we call to mind the Gospel of St. John and its many points of analogy with the Apocalypse, what particular lamb it was. It was the Paschal Lamb, the Lamb beheld in our Lord by the Baptist when, pointing to Jesus as He walked, he said to his disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God,"[1] and again beheld by the writer of the fourth Gospel on the Cross, when in the fact that the soldiers broke not the legs of Jesus, as they broke those of the malefactors hanging on either side of Him, he traced the fulfilment of the Scripture, "A bone of Him shall not be broken."[2] This therefore was the true Lamb "that taketh away the sin of the world," the Lamb that gives us His flesh to eat, so that in Him we may have eternal life.[3]

The Lamb has *seven horns*, the emblem of perfected strength, and *seven eyes*, which are explained to be the Spirit of God, sent forth in all His penetrating and searching power, so that none even in the very ends

[1] John i. 36.

[2] John xix. 36.

[3] The point now spoken of has been doubted. A full discussion of it by the present writer will be found in *The Expositor* for July and August, 1877.

of the earth can escape His knowledge. Further the Lamb is *standing as though it had been slaughtered*, and there never has been a moment's hesitation as to the interpretation of the figure. The words "as though" do not mean that the slaughtering had been only in appearance. It had been real. The Saviour, pierced with cruel wounds, "bowed His head" on Calvary, "and gave up His spirit."[1] "The first and the last and the Living One became dead,"[2] and had been laid in the tomb in the garden. But He had risen from that tomb on the third morning; and, "behold, He is alive for evermore."[3] He had ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high; and there He "stands," living and acting in all the plenitude of endless and incorruptible life.

One thing more has to be noticed: that this Lamb is the central figure of the scene before us, *in the midst of the throne and of the living creatures, and of the elders.* To Him all the works of God, both in creation and redemption, turn. To Him the old covenant led; and the prophets who were raised up under it searched "what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them."[4] From Him the new covenant flowed, and those who under it are called to the knowledge of the truth recognise in Him their "all and in all."[5] The Lamb slaughtered, raised from the grave, ascended, being the impersonation of that Divine love which is the essence of the Divine nature, is the visible centre of the universe. He is "the image of the invisible

[1] John xix. 30.
[2] Chap. i. 18
[3] Chap. i. 18.
[4] 1 Pet. i. 11.
[5] Col. iii. 11.

God, the First-born of all creation: for in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things have been created through Him, and unto Him: and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the Body, the Church: who is the Beginning, the First-born from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fulness dwell; and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens."[1]

Such is the Lamb; and He now comes, *and hath taken the roll out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne.* Let us note the words "hath taken." It is not "took." St. John sees the Lamb not only take the roll, but keep it. It is His,—His as the Son, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; His by right of the victory He has won; His as the First-born of all creation and the Head of the Church. It is His to keep, and to unfold, and to execute, "who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen."[2]

Therefore is He worthy of all praise, and to Him all praise is given:—

> And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four-and-twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with Thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation; and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests: and they reign over the earth (v. 8-10).

[1] Col. i. 15-20. [2] Rom. ix. 5.

It is not necessary to dwell upon the figures that are here employed, the *harp*, as connected with the Temple service, being the natural emblem of praise, and the *bowls full of incense* the emblem of prayer. But it is of importance to observe the *universality* of the praises and the prayers referred to, for as the language used here of these *men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation*, when they are said to have been made *a kingdom and priests unto our God*, is the same as that of chap. i. 6, we seem entitled to conclude that, even from its very earliest verses, the Apocalypse has the universal Church in view.

The song sung by this great multitude, including even the representatives of nature, now "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God,"[1] is wholly different from that of chap. iv. It is a *new song*, for it is the song of the "new creation;" and its burden, it will be observed, is not creation, but redemption by the blood of the Lamb, a redemption through which all partaking of it are raised to a higher glory and a fairer beauty than that enjoyed and exhibited before sin had as yet entered into the world, and when God saw that all that He had made was good.

The song was sung, but no sooner was it sung than it awoke a responsive strain from multitudes of which we have not yet heard:—

> And I saw, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders: and the number was ten thousands of ten thousands, and thousands of thousands; saying with a great voice, Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and glory, and blessing (v. 11, 12).

[1] Rom. viii. 21.

These are the angels, who are not within the throne, but *round about the throne and the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders.* Their place is not so near the throne, so near the Lamb. "For not unto angels did He subject the inhabited earth to come, whereof we speak."[1] He subjected it to man, to Him first of all who, having taken upon Him our human nature, and in that nature conquered, was "crowned with glory and honour," but then also to the members of His Body, who shall in due time be exalted to a similar dignity and shall *reign over the earth.* Yet angels rejoice with man and with creation redeemed and purified. They "desire to look into"[2] these things: "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."[3] He who was God manifested in flesh "appeared" after His resurrection "to angels;"[4] and, although they have not been purchased with the blood of the slaughtered Lamb, their hearts are filled with livelier ecstasy and their voices swell out into louder praise while the "manifold wisdom of God is made known" to them in their heavenly places.[5]

Even this is not all. There is a third stage in the ascending scale, a third circle formed for the widening song:—

And everything which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying, Unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever (v. 13).

What a sublime conception have we here before us!

[1] Heb. ii. 5.
[2] 1 Pet. i. 12.
[3] Luke xv. 10.
[4] 1 Tim. iii. 16.
[5] Eph. iii. 10.

The whole universe, from its remotest star to the things around us and beneath our feet, is one,—one in feeling, in emotion, in expression; one in heart and voice. Nothing is said of evil. Nor is it thought of. It is in the hands of God, who will work out His sovereign purposes in His own good time and way. We have only to listen to the universal harmony, and to see that it move us to corresponding praise.

It did so now :—

And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped (v. 14).

The redeemed creation is once more singled out for special mention. At chap. iv. 8, 10, they began the song; now we return to them that they may close it. All creation, man included, cries, *Amen.* The glorified Church has her heart too full to speak. She can only fall down and worship.

The distinction between chap. iv. and chap. v. must now be obvious, even while it is allowed that the same general thought is at the bottom of both chapters. In the one the Church when about to enter on her struggle has the call addressed to her: "Believe in God." In the other that call is followed up by the glorified Redeemer: "Believe also in Me."

Having listened to the call, there is no enemy that she need fear, and no trial from which she need shrink. She is already more than conqueror through Him that loved her. As we enter into the spirit of these chapters we cry,—

"God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do change,
And though the mountains be moved in the heart of the seas;

Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.
There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God,
The holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved:
God shall help her, and that right early.
The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved:
He uttered His voice, the earth melted.
The Lord of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our refuge."[1]

[1] Ps. xlvi. 1-7.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SEALED ROLL OPENED.

Rev. vi.

WITH the sixth chapter of the Apocalypse the main action of the book may be said properly to begin. Three sections of the seven into which it is divided have already passed under our notice. The fourth section, extending from chap. vi. 1 to chap. xviii. 24, is intended to bring before us the struggle of the Church, the judgment of God upon her enemies, and her final victory. No detail of historical events in which these things are fulfilled need be looked for. We are to be directed rather to the sources whence the trials spring, and to the principles by which the victory is gained. At this point in the unfolding of the visions it is generally thought that there is a pause, an interval of quietness however brief, and a hush of expectation on the part both of the Seer himself and of all the heavenly witnesses of the wondrous drama. But there seems to be no foundation for such an impression in the text; and it is more in keeping alike with the language of this particular passage and with the general probabilities of the case to imagine that the "lightnings and voices and thunders," spoken of in chap. iv. 5 as proceeding out of the throne, continue to re-echo over the scene, filling the hearts of the spectators with that sense of awe which they are naturally fitted to awaken.

We have to meet the Lord in judgment. We are to behold the Lamb as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah;" and when He so appears, "the mountains flow down at His presence."[1]

The Lamb then, who had, in the previous chapter, taken the book out of the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, is now to open it, part by part, seal by seal:—

And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, Come (vi. 1).

Particular attention ought to be paid to the fact that the true reading of the last clause of this verse is not, as in the Authorised Version, "Come and see," but simply, as in the Revised Version, *Come*. The call is not addressed to the Seer, but to the Lord Himself; and it is uttered by one of the four living creatures spoken of in chap. iv. 6, who are "in the midst of the throne and round about the throne," and who in ver. 8 of the same chapter are the first to raise the song from which they never rest, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord, God, the Almighty, which was and which is and which is to come." The word *Come* therefore embodies the longing of redeemed creation that the Lord, for the completion of whose work it waits, will take to Him His great power and reign. Not so much for the perfecting of its own happiness, or for deliverance from the various troubles by which it is as yet beset, and not so much for the manifestation of its Lord in His abounding mercy to His own, does the creation delivered from the bondage of corruption wait, as for the moment when Christ shall appear in awful majesty, King of

[1] Isa. lxiv. 1.

kings and Lord of lords, when He shall banish for ever from the earth the sin by which it is polluted, and when He shall establish, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, His glorious kingdom of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

This prospect is inseparably associated with the Second Coming of Him who is now concealed from our view; and therefore the cry of the whole waiting creation, whether animate or inanimate, to its Lord is *Come.* The cry, too, and that not only in the case of the first living creature, but (according to a rule of interpretation of which in this book we shall often have to make use) in the case of the three that follow, is uttered *with a voice of thunder;* and thunder is always an accompaniment and symbol of the Divine judgments.

No sooner is the cry heard than it is answered:—

> And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat thereon had a bow; and there was given unto him a crown: and he came forth conquering, and to conquer (vi. 2).

Few figures of the Apocalypse have occasioned more trouble to interpreters than that contained in these words. On the one hand, the particulars seem unmistakeably to point to the Lord Himself; but, on the other hand, if the first rider be the glorified Redeemer, it is difficult to establish that harmonious parallelism with the following riders which appears to be required by the well-ordered arrangement of the visions of this book. Yet it is clearly impossible to regard the first rider as merely a symbol of war, for the second rider would then convey the same lesson as the first; nor is there anything in the text to establish a distinction, frequently resorted to, by which the first rider is thought to denote foreign, and the second civil, war.

Every attempt also to separate the white horse of this vision from that of the vision at chap. xix. 11 fails, and must fail. Probably it is enough to say that not one of the four riders is a person. Each is rather a cause, a manifestation of certain truths connected with the kingdom of Christ when that kingdom is seen to be, in its own nature, the judgment of the world. Even war, famine, and death and Hades, which follow, are not literally these things. They are simply used, as scourges of mankind, to give general expression to the judgments of God. Thus also under the first rider the cause rather than the person of Christ is introduced to us, in the earliest stage of its victorious progress, and with the promise of its future triumph. The various points of the description hardly need to be explained. The colour of the horse is *white*, for throughout these visions that colour is always the symbol of heavenly purity. The rider has a *crown given* him, a crown of royalty. He has in his hand a *bow*, the instrument of war by which he scatters his enemies like stubble.[1] Finally, he *comes forth conquering and to conquer*, for his victorious march knows no interruption, and at last leaves no foe unvanquished. In the first rider we have thus the cause of Christ in its essence, as that cause of light which, having already drawn to it the sons of light, has become darkness to the sons of darkness. By the opening of the first Seal we learn that this cause is in the world, that this kingdom is in the midst of us, and that they who oppose it shall be overwhelmed with defeat.

The interpretation now given of the first rider as

[1] Isa. xli. 2.

one who rides forth to judgment on a sinful world is confirmed by what is said of the three that follow him. In them too we have judgment, and judgment only, while the three judgments spoken of—war, famine, and death—are precisely those with which the prophets in the Old Testament and the Saviour Himself in the New have familiarised our thoughts.[1] They are not to be literally understood. Like all else in the visions of St. John, they are used symbolically; and each of them expresses in a general form the calamities and woes, the misfortunes and sorrows, brought by sinful men upon themselves through rejection of their rightful King.

The second Seal is now broken, and the second rider follows:—

And when He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, Come. And another horse came forth, a red horse: and to him that sat thereon it was given to take peace from the earth, and that they should slaughter one another: and there was given unto him a great sword (vi. 3, 4).

The second horse is *red*, the colour of blood, for it is the horse of war: and slaughter follows it as its rider passes over *the earth;* that is, not over the earth in general, but over the ungodly. Two things in this vision are particularly worthy of notice. In the first place, the war spoken of is not between the righteous and the wicked, but among the wicked alone. The wicked *slaughter one another.* All persons engaged in these internecine conflicts have cast aside the offers of the Prince of peace; and, at enmity with Him who is the only true foundation of human brotherhood, they are also at enmity among themselves. Of the righteous

[1] Ezek. vi. 11; Matt. xxiv. 6-8.

nothing is yet said. We are left to infer that they are safe in their dwellings, in peaceable habitations, and in quiet resting-places.[1] By-and-by we shall learn that they are not only safe, but surrounded with joy and plenty In the second place, the original word translated "slay" both in the Authorised and Revised Versions deserves attention. It is a sacrificial term, the same as that found in chap. v. 6, where we read of the "slaughtered Lamb;" and here therefore, as there, it ought to be rendered, not "slay," but "slaughter." The instant we so translate, the whole picture rises before our view in a light entirely different from that in which we commonly regard it. What judgment, nay what irony of judgment, is there in the ways of God when He visits sinners with the terrors of His wrath! The very fate which men shrink from accepting in the form of a blessing overtakes them in the form of a curse. They think to save their life, and they lose it. They seek to avoid that sacrifice of themselves which, made in Christ, lies at the root of the true accomplishment of human destiny; and they are constrained to substitute for it a sacrifice of an altogether different kind: they sacrifice, they slaughter, one another.

The third Seal is now broken, and the third rider follows:—

And when He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold a black horse; and he that sat thereon had a balance in his hand. And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, A measure of wheat for a penny (or a silver penny), and three measures of barley for a penny; and the oil and the wine hurt thou not (vi. 5, 6).

[1] Isa. xxxii. 18.

The third living creature cries as the two before it had done; and a third horse comes forth, the colour of which is *black*, the colour of gloom and mourning and lamentation. Nor can there be any doubt that this condition of things is produced by scarcity, for the figure of the balance and of measuring bread by weight is on different occasions employed in the Old Testament to express the idea of famine. Thus among the threatenings denounced upon Israel should it prove faithless to God's covenant we read, "And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied."[1] And so also when Ezekiel would describe the miseries of the coming siege of Jerusalem he exclaims, "Moreover He said unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem: and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment: that they may want bread and water, and be astonied one with another, and consume away for their iniquity."[2] To give out corn by weight instead of measure was thus an emblem of scarcity. The particulars of the scarcity here described are obscured to the English reader by the unfortunate translation, both in this passage and elsewhere, and in the Revised as well as the Authorised Version, of the Greek *denarius* by the English *penny*. That coin was of the value of fully eightpence of our money, and was the recognised payment of a labourer's full day's work.[3] In ordinary circumstances it was sufficient to purchase eight of the small "measures" now referred to, so that when it

[1] Lev. xxvi. 26. [2] Ezek. iv. 16, 17. [3] Comp. Matt. xx. 2.

could buy one "measure" only, the quantity needed by a single man for his own daily food, it is implied that wheat had risen eight times in price, and that all that could be purchased by means of a whole day's toil would suffice for no more than one individual's sustenance, leaving nothing for his other wants and the wants of his family. No doubt *three measures of barley* could be purchased for the same sum, but barley was a coarser grain, and to be dependent upon it was in itself a proof that there was famine in the land. Again, as in the previous judgment, the words of the figure are not to be literally understood. What we have before us is not famine in its strict sense, but the judgment of God under the form of famine; and this second judgment is climactic to the first. Men say to themselves that they will live at peace with one another, and sow, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof. But in doing this they are mastered by the power of selfishness; the too eager pursuit of earthly interests defeats its end; and, under the influence of deeper and more mysterious laws than the mere political economist can discover, fields that might have been covered with golden harvests lie desolate and bare.

Nothing has yet been said of the last clause of this judgment: *The oil and the wine hurt thou not.* The words are generally regarded as a limitation of the severity of the famine previously described, and as a promise that even in judging God will not execute all His wrath. The interpretation can hardly be accepted. Not only does it weaken the force of the threatening, but the meaning thus given to the figure is entirely out of place. Oil and wine were for the mansions of the rich not for the habitations of the

poor, for the feast and not for the supply of the common wants of life. Nor would a sufferer from famine have found in them a substitute for bread. The meaning of the words therefore must be looked for in a wholly different direction. "Thou preparest a table before me," says the Psalmist, "in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."[1] This is the table the supply of which is now alluded to. It is prepared for the righteous in the midst of the struggles of the world, and in the presence of their enemies. Oil is there in abundance to anoint the heads of the happy guests, and their cups are so filled with plenty that they run over. In the words under consideration, accordingly, we have no limitation of the effects of famine. The "wine" and the "oil" alluded to express not so much what is simply required for life as the plenty and the joy of life; and, thus interpreted, they are a figure of the care with which God watches over His own people and supplies all their wants. While His judgments are abroad in the earth they are protected in the hollow of His hand. He has taken them into His banqueting house, and His banner over them is love. The world may be hungry, but they are fed. As the children of Israel had light in their dwellings while the land of Egypt lay in darkness, so while the world famishes the followers of Jesus have all and more than all that they require. They have "life, and that abundantly."[2] Thus we learn the condition of the children of God during the trials spoken of in these visions. Under the second Seal we could only infer from the general analogy of this book that they were safe. Now we

[1] Ps. xxiii. 5. [2] John x. 10.

know that they are not only safe, but that they are enriched with every blessing. They have oil that makes the face of man to shine, and bread that strengtheneth his heart.[1]

The fourth Seal is now broken, and the fourth rider follows:—

And when He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold a pale horse: and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Hades followed with him. And there was given unto them authority over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth (vi. 7, 8).

The colour of the fourth horse is *pale;* it has the livid colour of a corpse, corresponding to its rider, whose name, Death, is in this case given. *Hades followed with him,* not after him, thus showing that a gloomy and dark region beyond the grave is his inseparable attendant, and that it too is an instrument of God's wrath. In chap. i. 18 these two dire companions had also been associated with one another; and it is important to notice the combination, as the fact will afterwards throw light upon one of the most difficult visions of the book. "Death" is not neutral death, that separation between soul and body which awaits every individual of the human family until the Saviour comes. It is death in the deeper meaning which it so often bears in Scripture, and especially in the writings of St. John,—death as judgment. In like manner Hades is not the neutral grave where the rich and the poor meet together, where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest. It is the region occupied by those who have not found life

[1] Ps. civ. 15.

in Christ; and, not less than death, it is judgment. "Death" and "Hades" then are the culminating judgments of God upon *the earth*, that is, upon the wicked; and they execute their mission in a fourfold manner: by the *sword, and famine, and death, and the wild beasts of the earth.* The world, the symbolical number of which is four, instead of blessing such as submit themselves to its sway, turns round upon them with all the powers at its command and kills them. The wicked "are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken."[1]

It is not easy to say why authority is given death and Hades over no more than *the fourth part* of the earth, when we might rather have expected that their dominion would be extended over the whole. The question may be asked whether it is possible so to understand the Seer as to connect a "fourth part" of the earth, not with all the instruments together, but with each separate instrument of judgment afterwards named—one fourth to be killed with the sword, a second with famine, a third with death, and a fourth by wild beasts. Should such an idea be regarded as untenable, the probability is that a fourth part is mentioned in order to make room for the climactic rise to a "third part" afterwards met under the trumpet judgments.

The end of the first four Seals has now been reached, and at this point there is an obvious break in the hitherto harmonious progress of the visions. No fifth rider appears when the fifth Seal is broken, and we pass from the material into the spiritual, from the visible into the invisible, world. That the transition is

[1] Ps. ix. 15.

not accidental, but deliberately made, appears from this, that the very same principle of division marks the series of the trumpets at chap. ix. 1, and of the bowls at chap. xvi. 10. We have thus the number seven divided into its two parts four and three, while in chaps. ii. and iii. we had it divided into three and four. The difference is easily accounted for, three being the number of God, or the Divine, and therefore taking precedence when we are concerned with the existence of the Church, four being the number of the world, and therefore coming first when judgment on the world is described. It is of more consequence, however, to note the fact than to explain it, for it helps in no small degree to illustrate that artificial structure of the Apocalypse which is so completely at variance with the supposition that it describes in its successive paragraphs the successive historical events of the Christian age.

Passing then into a different region of thought, the fifth Seal is now broken:—

> And when He opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slaughtered for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And there was given them to each one a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, which should be killed even as they were, should be fulfilled (vi. 9-11).

The vision contained in these words is unquestionably a crucial one for the interpretation of the Apocalypse, and it will be necessary to dwell upon it for a little. The minor details may be easily disposed of. By the consent of all commentators of note, the *altar* referred to is the brazen altar of sacrifice, which stood in the outer court both of the Tabernacle and the

Temple; the *souls*, or lives, seen under it are probably seen under the form of blood, for the blood was the life: and the law of Moses commanded that when animals were sacrificed the blood should be poured out "at the bottom of the altar of burnt-offering, which is before the tabernacle of the congregation;"[1] while the *little time* mentioned in ver. 11 can mean nothing else than the interval between the moment when the souls were spoken to and that when the killing of their brethren should be brought to a close.

The main question to be answered is, Whom do these "souls" represent? Are they Christian martyrs, suffering perhaps at the hands of the Jews before the fall of Jerusalem, perhaps at the hands of the world to the end of time? Or are they the martyrs of the Old Testament dispensation, Jewish martyrs, who had lived and died in faith? Both suppositions have been entertained, though the former has been, and still is, that almost universally adopted. Yet there can be little doubt that the latter is correct, and that several important particulars of the passage demand its acceptance.

1. Let us observe how these martyrs are designated. They had been slain *for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.* But that is not the full expression of *Christian* testimony. As we read in many other passages of the book before us, Christians have "the testimony *of Jesus.*"[2] The addition needed to bring out the Christian character of the testimony referred to is wanting here. No doubt the saints of old looked forward to the coming of the Christ; but the testimony "of Jesus" is the testimony pertaining to

[1] Lev. iv. 7.

[2] Comp. chaps. i. 2 9; xi. 7; xii. 11, 17; xix. 10.

Him as a Saviour come, in all the glory of His person and in all the completeness of His work. It is a testimony embracing a full knowledge of the Messiah; and the inference is natural and legitimate that it is not ascribed to the souls under the altar, because they neither had nor could have possessed it.

2. The cry of these "souls" is worthy of notice, *How long, O Master, the holy and the true,* where the word "Master," applied also in Acts iv. 24 and Jude 4[1] to God as distinguished from Christ, corresponds better to the spirit of the Old than of the New Testament dispensation.

3. The time at which the martyrs had been killed belongs not to the present or the future, but to the past. Like all the other Seals, the fifth is opened at the very beginning of the Christian era; and no sooner is it opened than the souls are seen. It is true that the Seer might be supposed to transport himself forward into the future, and, at some point of Christian history more or less distant, to console Christian martyrs who had already fallen with the assurance that they had only to wait *a little time,* until such as were to be their later companions in martyrdom should have shared their fate. But such a supposition is inconsistent with the fact that St. John in the Apocalypse always thinks of the Christian age as one hardly capable of being divided; while, as we shall immediately see more clearly, it would make it impossible to explain the consolation afforded by the bestowal of the *white robe.*

4. The altar under which the blood is seen may help to confirm this conclusion, for that blood is not preserved in the inner sanctuary, in that "heaven" which is the

[1] Margin of Revised Version.

ideal home of all the disciples of Jesus: it lies beneath the altar of the outer court.

5. The main argument, however, in favour of the view now contended for, is to be found in the act by which these souls were comforted: *And there was given them to each one a white robe.* The white robe, then, they had not obtained before; and yet that robe belongs during his life on earth to every follower of Christ. Nothing is more frequently spoken of in these visions than the "white robe" of the redeemed, and it is obviously theirs from the first moment when they are united to their Lord. It is the robe of the priesthood, and at their very entrance upon true spiritual life they are priests in Him. It is the robe with which the faithful remnant in Sardis had been arrayed before they are introduced to us, for they had not "defiled" it; and the emphasis in the promise there given, "They shall walk with Me in white," appears to lie upon its first rather than its second clause.[1] Again, the promise to every one in that church that "overcometh" is that he "shall be arrayed in white garments;"[2] and it is beyond dispute that the promises of the seven epistles belong to the victory of faith gained in this world, not less than to the perfected reward of victory in the world to come. In like manner the Laodicean church is exhorted to buy of her Lord "white garments" that she may be clothed, as well as "gold" that she may be enriched, and "eyesalve" that she may see[3]; and, as the two latter purchases refer to her present state, so also must the former. When, too, the Lord is united in marriage to His Church, it is said that "it was given unto her that she should array herself in "fine linen,

[1] Chap. iii. 4. [2] Chap. iii. 5. [3] Chap. iii. 18.

bright and pure;" and that fine linen is immediately explained to be "the righteous acts of the saints."[1]

Putting all these passages together, we are distinctly taught that in the language of the Apocalypse the "white robe" denotes that perfect righteousness of Christ, both external and internal, which is bestowed upon the believer from the moment when he is by faith made one with Jesus. It is that more perfect justification of which St. Paul spoke at Antioch in Pisidia when he said to the Jews, "By Him every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."[2] It had been longed for by the saints of the Old Testament, but had never been fully bestowed upon them until Jesus came. David had prayed for it: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow;"[3] Isaiah had anticipated it when he looked forward to the acceptable year of the Lord: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels;"[4] and Ezekiel had celebrated it as the chief blessing of Gospel times: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. . . . And ye shall be My people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses."[5] But while thus prayed for, anticipated, and greeted from afar, the fulness of blessing belonging to the New Testament had not been actually

[1] Chap. xix. 8.
[2] Acts xiii. 39.
[3] Ps. li. 7.
[4] Isa. lxi. 10.
[5] Ezek. xxxvi. 25-29.

received under the Old. "He that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John."[1] As we are taught in the Epistle to the Hebrews, even Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and all those heroes of faith who had subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens—even "these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, *received not the promise:* God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect."[2] At death they were not made perfect. They passed rather into a holy rest where they waited until, like Abraham, who had "rejoiced that he should see Christ's day," they "saw it and were glad."[3] Then the "white robe" was given them. They were raised to the level of that Church which, now that Jesus had come, rejoiced in Him with "a joy unspeakable and glorified."[4]

These considerations appear sufficient to decide the point. The souls under the altar of the fifth Seal are the saints, not of Christianity, but of Judaism. It is true that all of them had not been literally "slaughtered." But it is a peculiarity of this book, of which further proof will be afforded as we proceed, that it regards all true followers of Christ as martyrs. Christ was Himself a Martyr; His disciples "follow" Him: they are martyrs. Christ's Church is a martyr Church. She dies in her Master's service, and for the world's good.

One point more ought to be noticed before we leave

[1] Matt. xi. 11.
[2] Heb. xi. 39, 40.
[3] John viii. 56.
[4] 1 Pet. i. 8 (R.V., margin).

this Seal. The language of these souls under the altar is apt to offend when they apparently cry for vengeance upon their murderers: *How long dost Thou not avenge?* Yet it is enough to say that so to interpret their cry is to do injustice to the whole spirit of this book Strictly speaking, in fact, they do not themselves cry. It is their blood that cries; it is the wrong done to them that demands reparation. In so far as they may be supposed to cry, they have in view, not their enemies as persons, but the evil that is in them, and that manifests itself through them. At first it may seem difficult to draw the distinction; but if we pause over the matter for a little, the difficulty will disappear. Never do we pity the sinner more, or feel for him with a keener sympathy, than when we are most indignant at sin and most earnest in prayer and effort for its destruction. The more anxious we are for the latter, the more must we compassionate the man who is enveloped in sin's fatal toils. When we long therefore for the hour at which sin shall be overtaken by the just judgment of God, we long only for the establishment of that righteous and holy kingdom which is inseparably bound up with the glory of God and the happiness of the world.

For this kingdom then the saints of the Old Testament, together with all their "brethren" under the New Testament, who like them are faithful unto death, now wait; and the opening of the sixth Seal tells us that it is at hand:—

And I saw when He opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood; and the stars of the heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig tree casteth her unripe figs, when she is shaken of a great wind. And the heaven was removed as a scroll when it

is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand? (vi. 12-17).

The description is marked by almost unparalleled magnificence and sublimity, and any attempt to dwell upon details could only injure the general effect. The real question to be answered is, To what does it apply? Is it a picture of the destruction of Jerusalem or of the final Judgment? Or may it even represent every great calamity by which a sinful world is overtaken? In each of these senses, and in each of them with a certain degree of truth, has the passage been understood. Each is a part of the great thought which it embraces. The error of interpreters has consisted in confining the whole, or even the primary, sense to any one of them. The true reference of the passage appears to be to the Christian dispensation, especially on its side of judgment. That dispensation had often been spoken of by the prophets in a precisely similar way; and the whole description of these verses, alive with the rich glow of the Eastern imagination, is taken partly from their language, and partly from the language of our Lord in the more prophetic and impassioned moments of His life.

Thus it was that Joel had announced the purpose of God: "And I will show wonders in the heavens and the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come," and again, "The sun and the moon shall

be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining;"[1] while, apart altogether from the immediately preceding and following words, which prove the interpretation above given to be correct, this announcement of Joel was declared by St. Peter on the day of Pentecost to apply to the *introduction* of that kingdom of Christ which, in the gift of tongues, was at that moment exhibited in power.[2] In like manner we read in the prophet Haggai, "For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations."[3] While, again, without our needing to dwell on the connexion in which the words occur, we find the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews applying the prophecy to the circumstances of those to whom he wrote at a time when they had heard the voice that speaketh from heaven, and had received the kingdom that cannot be moved.[4] The prophet Malachi also, whose words have been interpreted for us by our Lord Himself, describes the day of Him whom the Baptist was to precede and to introduce as the day that "burneth as a furnace," as "the great and terrible day of the Lord."[5] This aspect, too, of any great era in the history of a land or of a people had always been presented by the voice of prophecy in language from which the words before us are obviously taken. Thus it was that when Isaiah described the coming of a time at which the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow into it, he mentions, among its other characteristics, "And they shall go into the holes of the

[1] Joel ii. 30, 31; iii. 15.
[2] Acts ii. 16-21.
[3] Haggai ii. 6, 7.
[4] Heb. xii. 25-29.
[5] Mal. iv. 1, 5; Mark ix. 11-13.

rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth."[1] When the same prophet details the burden of Babylon which he saw, he exclaims, "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger to make the land a desolation, and to destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine;"[2] and again, when he widens his view from Babylon to a guilty world, "For the Lord hath indignation against all the nations, and fury against all their hosts. . . . And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fade away, as the leaf falleth from off the vine, and as a fading fig from the fig tree."[3] Many other passages of a similar kind might be quoted from the Old Testament; but, without quoting further from that source, it may be enough to call to mind that when our Lord delivered His discourse upon the last things He adopted a precisely similar strain: "*Immediately* after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken."[4]

Highly coloured, therefore, as the language used under the sixth Seal may appear to us, to the Jew, animated by the spirit of the Old Testament, it was simply that in which he had been accustomed to express his expectation of any new dispensation of the Almighty, of any striking crisis in the history of the

[1] Isa. ii. 19.
[2] Isa. xiii. 9, 10.
[3] Isa. xxxiv. 2, 4.
[4] Matt. xxiv. 29

world. Whenever he thought of the Judge of all the earth as manifesting Himself in a greater than ordinary degree, and as manifesting Himself in that truth and righteousness which was the glorious distinction of His character, he took advantage of such figures as we have now before us. To the fall of Jerusalem therefore, to every great crisis in human history, and to the close of all, they may be fittingly applied. In the eloquent language of Dr. Vaughan, "These words are wonderful in all senses, not least in this sense: that they are manifold in their accomplishment. Wherever there is a little flock in a waste wilderness; wherever there is a Church in a world; wherever there is a power of unbelief, ungodliness, and violence, throwing itself upon Christ's faith and Christ's people and seeking to overbear, and to demolish, and to destroy; whether that power be the power of Jewish bigotry and fanaticism, as in the days of the first disciples; or of pagan Rome, with its idolatries and its cruelties, as in the days of St. John and of the Revelation; or of papal Rome, with its lying wonders and its antichristian assumptions, in ages later still; or of open and rampant atheism, as in the days of the first French Revolution; or of a subtler and more insidious infidelity, like that which is threatening now to deceive, if it were possible, the very elect; wherever and whatever this power may be—and it has had a thousand forms, and may be destined yet to assume a thousand more—then, in each successive century, the words of Christ to His first disciples adapt themselves afresh to the circumstances of His struggling servants; warn them of danger, exhort them to patience, arouse them to hope, assure them of victory; tell of a near end for the individual and for the generation; tell also

of a far end, not for ever to be postponed, for time itself and for the world; predict a destruction which shall befall each enemy of the truth, and predict a destruction which shall befall the enemy himself whom each in turn has represented and served; explain the meaning of tribulation, show whence it comes, and point to its swallowing up in glory; reveal the moving hand above, and disclose, from behind the cloud which conceals it, the clear definite purpose and the unchanging loving will. Thus understood, each separate downfall of evil becomes a prophecy of the next and of the last; and the partial fulfilment of our Lord's words in the destruction of Jerusalem, or of St. John's words in the downfall of idolatry and the dismemberment of Rome, becomes itself in turn a new warrant for the Church's expectation of the Second Advent and of the day of judgment."[1]

While, however, the truth of these words may be allowed, it is still necessary to urge that the primary application of the language of the sixth Seal is to no one of such events in particular, but to something which includes them all. In other words, it applies to the Christian dispensation, viewed in its beginning, its progress, and its end, viewed in all those issues which it produces in the world, but especially on the side of judgment.

Nor ought such dark and terrible figures to startle us, as if they could not be suitably applied to a dispensation of mercy, of grace that we cannot fathom, of love that passeth knowledge. The Christian dispensation is not effeminacy. If it tells of abounding compassion for the sinner, it tells also of fire, and hail, and

[1] *Lectures on the Revelation*, p. 170.

vapour of smoke for the sin. If it speaks at one time in a gentle voice, it speaks at another in a voice of thunder; and, when the latter is rightly listened to, the air is cleared as by the whirlwind.

Although, therefore, the language of the prophets and of this passage may at first sight appear to be marked by far too great a measure both of strength and of severity to make it applicable to the Gospel age, it is in reality neither too strong nor too severe It is at variance only with the verdict of that superficial glance which is satisfied with looking at phenomena in their outward and temporary aspect, and which declines to penetrate into the heart of things. So long as man is content with such a spirit, he is naturally enough unstirred by any powerful emotion; and he can only say that words of prophetic fire are words of exaggeration and of false enthusiasm. But no sooner does he catch that spirit of the Bible which brings him into contact with eternal verities than his tone changes. He can no longer rest upon the surface. He can no longer dismiss the thought of mighty issues at stake around him with the reflection that "all the world's a stage, and all the men and women on it only players." When from the shore he looks out upon the mass of waters stretching before him, he thinks not merely of the light waves rippling at his feet and losing themselves in the sand, but of the unfathomed depths of the ocean from which they come, and of those mysterious movements of it which they indicate. He sees sights, he hears sounds, which the common eye does not see, and the common ear does not hear. The slightest motion of the soil speaks to him of earthquakes; the handful of snow loosened from the mountain-side, of avalanches; the simplest utterance of awe, of a cry

that the mountains and the hills are falling. The great does not become to him little; but the little becomes great. There is thus no exaggeration in the strength or even in the severity of prophetic figures. The prophet has passed from the world of shadows, flitting past him and disappearing, into the world of realities, Divine, unchangeable, and everlasting.

CHAPTER V.

CONSOLATORY VISIONS.

Rev. vii.

SIX of the seven Seals have been opened by the "Lamb," who is likewise the "Lion of the tribe of Judah." They have dealt, in brief but pregnant sentences, with the whole history of the Church and of the world throughout the Christian age. No details of history have indeed been spoken of, no particular wars, or famines, or pestilences, or slaughters, or preservations of the saints. Everything has been described in the most general terms. We have been invited to think only of the principles of the Divine government, but of these as the most sublime and, according to our own state of mind, the most alarming or the most consolatory principles that can engage the attention of men. God, has been the burden of the six Seals, is King over all the earth. Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? Why do they exalt themselves against the sovereign Ruler of the universe, who said to the Son of His love, when He made Him Head over all things for His Church, "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee;" "Rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies"?[1] Listening to the voice of these Seals, we know that the world, with

[1] Ps. ii. 7; cx. 7.

all its might, shall prevail neither against the Head nor against the members of the Body. Even when apparently successful it shall fight a losing battle. Even when apparently defeated Christ and they who are one with Him shall march to victory.

We are not to imagine that the Seals of chap. vi. follow one another in chronological succession, or that each of them belongs to a definite date. The Seer does not look forward to age succeeding age or century century. To him the whole period between the first and the second coming of Christ is but "a little time," and whatever is to happen in it "must shortly come to pass." In truth he can hardly be said to deal with the lapse of time at all. He deals with the essential characteristics of the Divine government in time, whether it be long or short. Shall the revolving years be in our sense short, these characteristics will nevertheless come forth with a clearness that shall leave man without excuse. Shall they be in our sense long, the unfolding of God's eternal plan will only be again and again made manifest. He with whom we have to do is without beginning of days or end of years, the *I am*, unchangeable both in the attributes of His own nature, and in the execution of His purposes for the world's redemption. Let us cast our eyes along the centuries that have passed away since Jesus died and rose again. They are full of one great lesson. At every point at which we pause we see the Son of God going forth conquering and to conquer. We see the world struggling against His righteousness, refusing to submit to it, and dooming itself in consequence to every form of woe. We see the children of God following a crucified Redeemer, but preserved, sustained, animated, their cross, like His, their crown. Finally, as we realize more

and more deeply what is going on around us, we feel that we are in the midst of a great earthquake, that the sun and the moon have become black, and that the stars of heaven are falling to the earth; yet by the eye of faith we pierce the darkness, and where are all our adversaries? Where are the kings and the potentates, the rich and the powerful *of the earth*, of an ungodly and persecuting world? They have hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and we hear them say to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?"

With the beginning of chap. vii. we might expect the seventh Seal to be opened; but it is the manner of the apocalyptic writer, before any final or particularly critical manifestation of the wrath of God, to present us with visions of consolation, so that we may enter into the thickest darkness, even into the valley of the shadow of death, without alarm. We have already met with this in chaps. iv. and v. We shall meet with it again. Meanwhile it is here illustrated:—

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that no wind should blow on the earth, or on the sea, or upon any tree. And I saw another angel ascend from the sun-rising, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a great voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we shall have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed, a hundred and forty and four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand; of the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Gad, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Asher, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Naphtali, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Manasseh, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand;

of the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand ; of the tribe of Issachar, twelve thousand ; of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve thousand ; of the tribe of Joseph, twelve thousand ; of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand (vii. 1-8).

Although various important questions, which we shall have to notice, arise in connexion with this vision, there never has been, as there scarcely can be, any doubt as to its general meaning. In its main features it is taken from the language of Ezekiel, when that prophet foretold the approaching destruction of Jerusalem: "He cried also with a loud voice in mine ears, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with fine linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side. . . . And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. . . . And, behold, the man clothed with linen, which had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as Thou hast commanded me."[1] Preservation of the faithful in the midst of judgment on the wicked is the theme of the Old Testament vision, and in like manner it is the theme of this vision of St. John. The *winds* are the symbols of judgment; and, being in number *four* and held by *four angels standing at the four corners of the earth*, they indicate that the judgment when inflicted will be universal. There is no place to which the ungodly can escape,

[1] Ezek. ix.

none where they shall not be overtaken by the wrath of God. "He that fleeth of them," says the Almighty by His prophet, "shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered. Though they dig into hell, thence shall Mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: and though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from My sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them."[1]

In the midst of all this the safety of the righteous is secured, and that in a way, as compared with the way of the Old Testament, proportionate to the superior greatness of their privileges. They are marked as God's, not by a man out of the city, but by an *angel ascending from the sun-rising*, the quarter whence proceeds that light of day which gilds the loftiest mountain-tops and penetrates into the darkest recesses of the valleys. This angel, with his *great voice*, is probably the Lord Himself appearing by His angel. The mark impressed upon the righteous is more than a mere mark: it is a *seal*—a seal similar to that with which Christ was "sealed;"[2] the seal which in the Song of Songs the bride desires as the token of the Bridegroom's love to her alone: "Set me as a seal upon Thine heart, as a seal upon Thine arm;"[3] the seal which expresses the thought, "The Lord knoweth them that are His."[4] Finally, this seal is impressed *on the forehead*, on that part of the body on which the high-priest of Israel wore the golden plate, with its inscription, "Holiness to the Lord." Such a seal,

[1] Amos ix. 1-3.
[2] John vi. 27.
[3] Cant. viii. 3.
[4] 2 Tim. ii. 19.

manifest to the eyes of all, was a witness to all that they who bore it were acknowledged by the Redeemer before all, even before His Father and the holy angels.[1]

When we turn to the numbers sealed, every reader who reflects for a moment will allow that they must be symbolically, and not literally, understood. Twelve thousand out of each of twelve tribes, in all *a hundred and forty and four thousand*, bears upon its face the stamp of symbolism. It is more difficult to answer the question, Who are they? Are they Jewish Christians, or are they the whole multitude of God's faithful people belonging to the Church universal, but indicated by a figure taken from Judaism?

The question now asked is of greater than ordinary importance, for upon the answer given to it largely depends the solution of the problem whether the author of the fourth Gospel and the author of the Apocalypse are the same. If the first vision of the chapter relating to those sealed out of the tribes of Israel speak only of Jewish Christians, and the second vision, beginning at ver. 9, of "the great multitude which no man could number," speak of Gentile Christians, it will follow that the writer exhibits a particularistic tendency altogether at variance with the universalism of the author of the fourth Gospel. Gentile Christians will be, as they have been called, an "appendix" to the Jewish-Christian Church; and the followers of Jesus will fail to constitute one flock all the members of which are equal in the sight of God, occupy the same position, and enjoy the same privileges. The first impression produced by the vision of the sealed is undoubtedly that it refers to Jewish Christians, and to them alone.

[1] Comp. Luke xii. 8.

Many considerations, however, lead to the wider conclusion that, under a Jewish figure, they include all the followers of Christ, or the universal Church. Some of these at least ought to be noticed.

1. We have not yet found, and we shall not find in any later part of the Apocalypse, a distinction drawn between Jewish and Gentile Christians. To the eye of the Seer, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is one. There is in it neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free. He recognises in it in its collective capacity the Body of Christ, all the members of which occupy the same relation to their Lord, and stand equally in grace. He knows indeed of a distinction between the Jewish Church, which waited for the coming of the Lord, and the Christian Church, which rejoiced in Him as come; but he knows also that when Jesus did come the privileges of the latter were bestowed upon those in the former who had looked onward to Christ's day, and that they were arrayed in the same "white robe." Under all the six Seals, accordingly, embracing the whole period of the Gospel dispensation, there is not a single word to suggest the thought that the Christian Church is divided into two parts. The struggle, the preservation, and the victory belong equally to all. A similar remark may be made on the epistles to the seven churches, which unquestionably contain a representation of that Church the fortunes of which are to be afterwards described. In these epistles Christ walks equally in the midst of every part of it; and promises are made, not in one form to one member and in another to another, but always in precisely the same terms to "him that overcometh." It would be out of keeping with this were we now, when a similar topic of preservation is on hand, to be

introduced to a Jewish-Christian as distinguished from a Gentile-Christian Church.

2. It is the custom of the Seer to heighten and spiritualize all Jewish names. The Temple, the Tabernacle, the Altar, Mount Zion, and Jerusalem are to him the embodiments of ideas deeper than those literally conveyed by them. Analogy therefore might suggest that this also would be the case with the word "Israel." Nay, it would even be the more natural so to use that word, because it is so often used in the same spiritual sense in other parts of the New Testament: "But they are not all Israel which are of Israel;" "And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."[1] Nor need we be startled by that employment of the word *tribes*, which may seem to give more precision to the idea that Jewish Christians are designated by the term, for St. John, in his peculiar way of looking at men, beheld "tribes" not only among the Jews, but among all nations: "And all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over Him."[2] In chap. xxi. 12, too, the "twelve tribes" plainly include all believers.

3. The enumeration of the tribes of Israel given in these verses is different from any other enumeration of the kind contained in Scripture. Thus the tribe of Dan is omitted; and, contrary to the practice of at least the later books of the Old Testament, that of Levi is inserted; while Joseph also is substituted for Ephraim: and the order in which the twelve are given has elsewhere no parallel. Points such as these may appear trifling, but they are not without importance. No student of the Apocalypse will imagine that they are

[1] Rom. ix. 6; Gal. vi. 16. [2] Chap. i. 7.

accidental or undesigned. He may not be able to satisfy either himself or others as to the grounds upon which St. John proceeded, but that there were grounds sufficient to the Apostle himself for what he did he will not for a moment doubt. One thing may, however, be said. If the changes can be explained at all, it must be by considerations springing out of the heart of the Christian community, and not out of any suggested by the relations of the tribes of Judaism to one another. Levi may thus be inserted, instead of standing apart as formerly, because in Christ Jesus there was no priestly tribe: all Christians were priests; Dan may be omitted because that tribe had chosen the serpent as its emblem, and St. John not only felt with peculiar power the direct antagonism to Christ of "the old serpent the devil,"[1] but had been accustomed to see in the traitor Judas, who had been expelled from the apostolic band, and for whom another apostle had been substituted, the very impersonation or incarnation of Satan[2]; Ephraim also may have been replaced by Joseph because of its enmity to Judah, the tribe out of which Jesus sprang; while Judah, the fourth son of Jacob, may head the list because it was the tribe in which Christ was born.

4. Some of the expressions of the passage are inconsistent with the limitation of the sealed to any special class of Christians. Why, for example, should the holding back of the winds be universal? Would it not have been enough to restrain the winds that blew on Jewish Christians, and not the winds of the whole earth? And again, why do we meet with language of so general a character as that of ver. 3:

[1] Comp. chap. xii. 9.

[2] John xiii. 2.

"till we shall have sealed the servants of our God"? This designation "servants" seems to include the whole number, and not some only, of God's children.

5. If God's servants from among the Gentiles are not now sealed, the Apocalypse mentions no other occasion when they were so. It is true that, according to the ordinary interpretation of the next vision, they are admitted to the happiness of heaven; but we may well ask whether, if the sealing be the emblem of preservation amidst worldly troubles, they ought not also, at one time or another, to have been sealed on earth.

6. The sealed are marked upon their *foreheads*, and in chap. xxii. 4 all believers are marked in a similar way.

7. We shall meet again this number of a hundred and forty-four thousand in chap. xiv.; and, while it can hardly be doubted that the same persons are on both occasions included in it, it will be seen that there at least the whole number of the redeemed is meant.

8. It is worthy of notice that the contrasts of the Apocalypse lead directly to a similar conclusion. St. John always sees light and darkness standing over against each other, and exhibiting themselves in a correspondence which, extending even to minute details, aids the task of the interpreter. Now in many passages of this book we find Satan not only marking his followers, but, precisely as here, marking them upon the "forehead;"[1] and it is impossible to resist the conclusion that the one marking is the antithesis of the other. But this mark is imprinted by Satan upon *all* his followers, and the inference is legitimate that the seal of the living God is in like manner imprinted upon *all* the followers of Jesus.

[1] Chaps. xiii. 16, 17; xiv. 9; xvii. 5; xix. 20; xx. 4.

9. One more reason may be assigned for this conclusion. If ver. 4, with its "hundred and forty and four thousand out of every tribe of the children of Israel," is to be understood of Jewish Christians alone, the contrast between it and ver. 9, with its "great multitude, which no man can number, out of every nation, and of all tribes, and peoples, and tongues," makes it necessary to understand the latter of Gentile Christians alone. It will not do to say that the comprehensive enumeration of this verse may include Jewish as well as Gentile Christians. Placed over against the very definite statement of ver. 4, it can only, according to the style of the Apocalypse, be referred to persons who have come out of the heathen world in the fourfold conception of its parts. Now, whatever may be the precise interpretation of the second vision of the chapter, it is undeniable that it unfolds a higher stage of privilege and glory than the first. It will thus follow on the supposition now combated that at the very instant when the Apostle is said to be placing Gentile Christians in a position of inferiority to Jewish Christians, and when he is treating the one as simply an "appendix" to the other, he speaks of them as the inheritors of a far greater "weight of glory." St. John could not be thus inconsistent with himself.

The conclusion from all that has been said, is plain. The vision of the sealing does not apply to Jewish Christians only, but to the universal Church. When the judgments of God are abroad in the world, all the disciples of Christ are sealed for preservation against them.

Notwithstanding what has been said, the reader may still find it difficult to conceive that two pictures of the

same multitude should be presented to us drawn on such entirely different lines. What is the meaning of it? he may exclaim. What is the Seer's motive in doing so? The explanation is not difficult. An attentive examination of the structural principles marking the writings of St. John will show that they are distinguished by a tendency to set forth the same object in two different lights, the latter of which is climactic to the former, as well as, for the most part at least, taken from a different sphere. The writer is not satisfied with a single utterance of what he desires to impress upon his readers. After he has uttered it for the first time, he brings it again before him, works upon it, enlarges it, deepens it, sets it forth with stronger and more vivid colouring. The fundamental idea is the same on both occasions; but on the second it is the centre of a circle of wider circumference, and it is uttered in a more impressive manner. Want of space will not permit the illustration of this by an appeal either to the nature of Hebrew thought in general, or to the other writings of the New Testament which owe their authorship to St. John. It must be enough to say that the fourth Gospel bears deep and important traces of this characteristic, and that difficult passages in it not otherwise explicable seem to be solved by its application.[1] The main point to be kept in view is that the principle in question may be traced on many different occasions both in the fourth Gospel and in the Apocalypse. One of these has indeed already come under our notice in the case of the "golden candlesticks" and of the "stars" in Chapter I. of this book. The two figures relate to the same object, but the

[1] The writer has treated this subject at considerable length in *The Expositor* (2nd series, vol. iv.).

second is climactic to the first, and it is taken from a larger field. The same principle meets us here. The second vision of chap. vii. is climactic to the first, and the field from which it is drawn is larger. The analogy, however, not of the golden candlesticks and of the stars only, but of many other passages of a similar kind, warrants the inference that both the visions relate to the same thing, although the aspect in which it is looked at is in each case different. Any difficulty therefore at first presented by the double picture disappears; while the peculiarity of structure exhibited not only helps to lead us to a Johannine authorship, but tends powerfully to establish the correctness of the interpretation now adopted.

We are thus entitled to conclude that the hundred and forty-four thousand of this first consolatory vision represent not Jewish Christians only, but the whole Church of God, and that the number used is intended to represent completeness: not one member of the true Church is lost.[1] Twelve, a sacred number, the number of the patriarchs, of the tribes of Israel, and of the Apostles of Jesus, is first multiplied by itself, and then by a thousand, the sign of the heavenly in contrast with the earthly. A hundred and forty and four thousand is the result.

It need only further be observed—and the observation will help to confirm what has been said—that St. John did not himself count the number of the sealed. He *heard the number of them* (ver. 4). Already they were "a multitude which no *man* could number" (ver. 9). But He who telleth the innumerable stars that sparkle in the midnight sky, and who "bringeth out their host

[1] Comp. John xvii 12.

by number,"[1] could number them. He it was who communicated the number to the Seer.

The second vision of the chapter follows:—

After these things I saw, and, behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation, and of all tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands; and they cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation unto our God which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels were standing round about the throne, and about the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, These which are arrayed in the white robes, who are they, and whence came they? And I said unto him, My lord, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat: for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their Shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes (vii. 9-17).

Upon the magnificence and beauty of this description it is not only unnecessary, it would be a mistake, to dwell. Words of man would only mar the sublimity and pathos of the spectacle. Neither is it desirable to look at each expression of the passage in itself. These expressions are better considered as a whole. One point indeed ought to be carefully kept in view: that the *palms* spoken of in ver. 9 as in the *hands* of the happy multitude are not the palms of victory in any earthly contest, but the palms of the Feast of Tabernacles, and

[1] Isa. xl. 26.

that upon the thought of that feast the scene is moulded.

The Feast of Tabernacles, it will be remembered, was at once the last, the highest, and the most joyful of the festivals of the Jewish year. It fell in the month of October, when the harvest not only of grain, but of wine and oil, had been gathered in, and when, therefore, all the labours of the year were past. It was preceded, too, by the great Day of Atonement, the ceremonial of which gathered together all the sacrificial acts of the previous months, beheld the sins of the people, from their highest to their lowest, carried away into the wilderness, and brought with it the blessing of God from that innermost recess of the sanctuary which was lightened by the special glory of His presence, and into which the high-priest even was permitted to enter upon that day alone. The feelings awakened in Israel at the time were of the most triumphant kind. They returned in thought to the independent life which their fathers, delivered from the bondage of Egypt, led in the wilderness; and, the better to realize this, they left their ordinary dwellings and took up their abode for the days of the feast in booths, which they erected in the streets or on the flat roofs of their houses. These booths were made of branches of their most prized, most fruit-bearing, and most umbrageous trees; and beneath them they raised their psalms of thanksgiving to Him who had delivered them as a bird out of the snare of the fowler. Even this was not all, for we know that in the later period of their history the Jews connected the Feast of Tabernacles with the brightest anticipations of the future as well as with the most joyful memories of the past. They beheld in it the promise of the Spirit, the great gift of the approaching

Messianic age; and, that they might give full expression to this, they sent on the eighth, or great, day of the feast, a priest to the pool of Siloam with a golden urn, that he might fill it from the pool, and, bringing it up to the Temple, might pour it on the altar. This is the part of the ceremonial alluded to in John vii. 37-39, and during it the joy of the people reached its highest point. They surrounded the priest in crowds as he brought up the water from the pool, waved their *lulabs*—small branches of palm trees, the "palms" of ver. 9—and made the courts of the Temple re-echo with their song, "With joy shall ye draw water out of wells of salvation."[1] At night the great illumination of the Temple followed, that to which our Lord most probably alludes when, immediately after the Feast of Tabernacles spoken of in chap. viii. of the fourth Gospel, He exclaims, "I am the Light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life."[2]

Such was the scene the main particulars of which are here made use of by the apocalyptic Seer to set before us the triumphant and glorious condition of the Church when, after all her members have been sealed, they are admitted to the full enjoyment of the blessings of God's covenant, and when, washed in the blood of the Lamb and clothed with His righteousness, they keep their Feast of Tabernacles.

A most important and interesting question connected with this vision has still to be answered. It may be first asked in the words of Isaac Williams. "It is whether all this description is of the Church in heaven or on earth." The same writer has answered his

[1] Isa. xli. 3. [2] John viii. 12.

question by saying, "The fact is that, like the expression 'the kingdom of heaven,' and many others of the same kind, it applies to both, and it is doubtless intended to do so—in fulness hereafter, but even here in part."[1] The answer thus given is no doubt correct when the question is asked in the particular form to which it is a reply. Yet we have still to ask whether, granting it to be so, the *primary* reference of the vision is to the Church of Christ during her present pilgrimage or after that pilgrimage has been completed, and she has entered on her eternal rest. To the question so put, the reply usually given is that the Seer has the latter aspect of the Church in view. The redeemed are sealed on *earth;* they bear their "palms," and rejoice with the joy afterwards spoken of, in *heaven.* Much in the passage may seem to justify this conclusion. But a recent writer on the subject has adduced such powerful considerations in favour of the former view, that it will be proper to examine them.[2]

Appeal is first made to Matt. xxiv. 13, a passage throwing no light upon the point. It is otherwise with many prophecies of the Old Testament next referred to, which describe the coming dispensation of the Gospel: "They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for He that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them;" "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces;" "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to

[1] *The Apocalypse*, p. 126.

[2] Professor Gibson, in *The Monthly Interpreter*, vol. ii., p. 9.

keep the Feast of Tabernacles."[1] To passages such as these have to be added the promises of our Lord as to fountains of living waters even now opened to the believer, that he may drink and never thirst again: "Jesus answered and said unto her, Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a springing fountain of water, unto eternal life;" "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."[2] St. John, too, it is urged, teaches us to look for a Tabernacle Feast on earth[3]; while at the same time throughout all his writings eternal life is set before us as a present possession. Nor is this the case only in the writings of St. John. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we meet the same line of thought: "Ye are come" (not Ye shall come) "unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, who are enrolled in heaven."[4] Influenced by these considerations, the writer to whom we have referred is led, "though not without some hesitation," to conclude that the vision of the palm-bearing multitude is to be understood of the Church on earth, and not of the Church in heaven.

The conclusion may be accepted without the "hesitation." The colours on the canvas may indeed at first appear too bright for any condition of things on this

[1] Isa. xlix. 10; xxv. 8; Zech. xiv. 16.
[2] John iv. 13, 14; vii. 37 38.
[3] John i. 14.
[4] Heb. xii. 22, 23.

side the grave. But they are not more bright than those employed in the description of the new Jerusalem in chap. xxi.; and, when we come to the exposition of that chapter, we shall find positive proof in the language of the Seer that he looks upon that city as one already come down from heaven and established among men. Not a few of its most glowing traits are even precisely the same as those that we meet in the corresponding vision of this chapter: "And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall tabernacle with them, and they shall be His peoples, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God; and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away."[1] If words like these may be justly applied, as we have yet to see that they may and must be, to one aspect of the Church on earth, there is certainly nothing to hinder their application to the same Church now. The truth is that in both cases the description is ideal, and that not less so than the description of the terrors of the worldly at the opening of the sixth Seal. Nor indeed shall we understand any part of the Apocalypse unless we recognise the fact that everything with which it is concerned is raised to an ideal standard. Reward and punishment, righteousness and sin, the martyrdoms of the Church and the fate of her oppressors, are all set before us in an ideal light. The Seer moves in the midst of conceptions which are fundamental, ultimate, and eternal. The "broken lights" which partially illuminate our progress in this world are to him

[1] Chap. xxi 2.

absorbed in "the true Light." The clouds and darkness which obscure our path gather themselves together to his eyes in "the darkness" with which the light has to contend. Descriptions, accordingly, applicable in their fulness to the Church only after the glory of her Lord is manifested, apply also to her now, when she is thought of as living the life that is hid with Christ in God, the life of her exalted and glorified Redeemer. For this conception the colours of the picture before us are not too bright.[1]

The relation in which the two visions of this chapter stand to one another may now be obvious. Although the persons referred to are in both the same, they do not in both occupy the same position. In the first they are only sealed, and through that sealing they are safe. Their Lord has taken them under His protection; and, whatever troubles or perils may beset them, no one shall pluck them out of His hand. In the second they are more than safe. They have peace, and joy, and triumph, their every want supplied, their every sorrow healed. Death itself is swallowed up in victory, and every tear is wiped from every eye.

Thus also may we determine the period to which both the sealing of believers and their subsequent enjoyment of heavenly blessing belong. In neither vision are we introduced to any special era of Christian history. St. John has in view neither the Christians of his own day alone, nor those of any later time. As we found that each of the first six Seals embraced the whole Gospel age, so also is it with these consolatory visions. We are to dwell upon the *thought* rather than the *time* of preservation and of bliss. The

[1] Comp. on the general thought Brown, *The Second Advent*, chap. vi.

Church of Christ never ceases to follow in the footsteps of her Lord. Like Him, when faithful to her high commission, she never ceases to bear the cross. The unredeemed world must always be her enemy; and in it she must always have tribulation. But not less continuous is her joy. We judge wrongly when we think that the Man of sorrows was never joyful. He spoke of "My peace," "My joy."[1] In one of His moments of deepest feeling we are told that He "rejoiced in spirit."[2] Outwardly the world troubled Him; and huge billows, raised by its tempestuous winds, swept across the surface of His soul. Beneath, the unfathomed depths were calm. In communion with His Father in heaven, in the thought of the great work which He was carrying to its completion, and in the prospect of the glory that awaited Him, He could rejoice in the midst of sorrow. So also with the members of His Body. They bear about with them a secret joy which, like their new name, no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. As the friend of the bridegroom who standeth and heareth him rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice, so their joy is fulfilled.[3] Nor does it ever cease to be theirs while their Lord is with them; and unless they grieve Him "lo, He is always with them, even unto the consummation of the age."[4] The two visions, therefore, of the sealing and of the palm-bearing multitude embrace the whole Christian dispensation within their scope, and express ideas which belong to the condition of the believer in all places and at all times.

[1] John xiv. 27; xvii. 13.
[2] Luke x. 21.
[3] John iii. 29.
[4] Matt. xxviii. 20.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIRST SIX TRUMPETS.

Rev. viii., ix.

THE two consolatory visions of chap. vii. have closed, and the Seer returns to that opening of the seven Seals which had been interrupted in order that these two visions might be interposed.

Six Seals had been opened in chap. vi.; the opening of the seventh follows:—

> And when He opened the seventh seal, there followed silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stand before God; and there were given unto them seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should give it unto the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel taketh the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it upon the earth: and there followed thunders, and voices, and lightnings, and an earthquake. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound (viii. 1-6).

Before looking at the particulars of this Seal, we have to determine the relation in which it stands to the Seals of chap. vi. as well as to the visions following it. Is it as isolated, as independent, as those that have come before it; and are its contents exhausted by the first six verses of the chapter? or does it occupy

such a position of its own that we are to regard the following visions as developed out of it? And if the latter be the case, how far does the development extend?

In answering these questions, it can hardly be denied that if we are to look upon the seventh Seal as standing independent and alone, its contents have not the significance which we seem entitled to expect. It is the last Seal of its own series; and when we turn to the last member of the Trumpet series at chap. xi. 15, or of the Bowl series at chap. xvi. 17, we find them marked, not by less, but by much greater, force than had belonged in either case to the six preceding members. The seventh Trumpet and the seventh Bowl sum up and concentrate the contents of their predecessors. In the one the judgments of God represented by the Trumpets, in the other those represented by the Bowls, culminate in their sharpest expression and their most tremendous potency. There is nothing of that kind in the seventh Seal if it terminates with the preparation of the Trumpet angels to sound; and the analogy of the Apocalypse therefore, an analogy supplying in a book so symmetrically constructed an argument of greater than ordinary weight, is against that supposition.

Again, the larger portion of the first six verses of this chapter does not suggest the contents of the Seal. Rather would it seem as if these contents were confined to the "silence" spoken of in ver. 1, and as if what follows from ver. 2 to ver. 6 were to be regarded as no part of the Seal itself, but simply as introductory to the Trumpet visions. Everything said bears upon it the marks of preparation for what is to come, and we are not permitted to rest in what is passing as if it were a final and conclusive scene in the great spectacle presented to the Seer.

For these reasons the view often entertained that the visions to which we proceed are developed out of the seventh Seal may be regarded as correct.

If so, how far does the development extend? The answer invariably given to this question is, To the end of the Trumpets. But the answer is not satisfactory. The general symmetry of the Apocalypse militates against it. There is then no correspondence between the *last* Trumpet and the *last* Seal, nothing to suggest the thought of a development of the Bowls out of the seventh Trumpet in a manner corresponding to the development of the Trumpets out of the seventh Seal. In these circumstances the only probable conclusion is that *both* the Bowls and the Trumpets are developed out of the seventh Seal, and that that development does not close until we reach the end of chap. xvi.

If what has now been said be correct, it will throw important light upon the relation of the Seals to the two series of the Trumpets and the Bowls taken together; while, at the same time, it will lend us valuable aid in the interpretation of all the three series.

Returning to the words before us, it is said that, at the opening of the seventh Seal, *there followed silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.* This silence may perhaps include a cessation even of the songs which rise before the throne of God from that redeemed creation the voice of whose praise rests not either day or night.[1] Yet it is not necessary to think so. The probability rather is that it arises from a cessation only of the "lightnings and voices and thunders" which at chap. iv. 5 proceed out of the throne, and which are resumed at ver. 5 of the present chapter, when the

[1] Chap. iv. 8.

fire of the altar is cast from the angel's censer upon the earth. A brief suspension of judgment is thereby indicated, a pause by and during which the Almighty would call attention to the manifestations of His wrath about to follow. The exact duration of this silence, "about the space of half an hour," has never been satisfactorily explained; and the general analogy of St. John's language condemns the idea of a literal interpretation. We shall perhaps be more in accordance with the spirit in which the Revelation is written if we consider—(1) that in that book the half of anything suggests, not so much an actual half, as a broken and interrupted whole,—five a broken ten, six a broken twelve, three and a half a broken seven; (2) that in the Gospel of St. John we find on more than one occasion mention made of an "hour" by which at one time the actions, at another the sufferings, of Jesus are determined: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come;" "Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour."[1] The "hour" of Jesus is thus to St. John the moment at which action, having been first resolved on by the Father, is taken by the Son; and a "half-hour" may simply denote that the course of events has been interrupted, and that the instant for renewed judgment has been delayed. Such an interpretation will also be in close correspondence with the verses following, as well as with what we have seen to be the probable meaning of the "silence" of ver. 1. Preparation for action, rather than action, marks as yet the opening of the seventh Seal.

That preparation is next described.

[1] John ii. 4; xii. 27.

St. John saw *seven trumpets* given to *the seven angels which stand before God.* In whatever other respects these seven angels are to be distinguished from the hosts of angels which surround the throne, the commission now given shows that they are angels of a more exalted order and a more irresistible power. They are in fact the expression of the Divine Judge of men, or rather of the mode in which He chooses by judgment to express Himself. We are not even required to think of them as numerically seven, for seven in its sacred meaning is the number of unity, though of unity in the variety as well as the combination of its agencies. The "seven Spirits of God" are His one Spirit; the "seven churches," His one Church; the "seven horns" and "seven eyes" of the Lamb, His one powerful might and His one penetrating glance. In like manner the seven Seals, the seven Trumpets, and the seven Bowls embody the thought of many judgments which are yet in reality one. Thus also the angels here are seven, not because literally so, but because that number brings out the varied forms as well as the essential oneness of the action of Him to whom the Father has given "authority to execute judgment, because He is a Son of man."[1]

As yet the seven trumpets have only been given to the seven angels. More has to pass before they put them to their lips and sound. Another angel is seen who *came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer* in his hand. At the opening of the fifth Seal we read of an "altar" which it was impossible not to identify with the great brazen altar, the altar of burnt-offering, in the outer court of the sanctuary. Such identification

[1] John v. 27.

is not so obvious here; and perhaps a majority of commentators agree in thinking that the altar now spoken of is rather the golden or incense altar which had its place within the Tabernacle, immediately in front of the second veil. To this altar the priest on ordinary occasions, and more particularly the high-priest on the great Day of Atonement, brought a censer with burning frankincense, that the smoke of the incense, as it rose into the air, might be a symbol to the congregation of Israel that its prayers, offered according to the Divine will, ascended as a sweet savour to God. It is possible that this may be the altar meant; yet the probabilities of the case rather lead to the supposition that allusion is made to the altar of sacrifice in the Tabernacle court; for (1) when the Seer speaks here and again in ver. 5 of "the altar," and in ver. 3 of "the golden altar," he seems to distinguish between the two. (2) The words *fire of the altar* are in favour of the same conclusion. According to the ritual of the Law, it was from the brazen altar that fire was taken in order to kindle the incense,[1] while at the same time fire continually burned upon that altar, but not upon the altar within the Tabernacle. (3) The thought represented by the symbolism seems to be that the sufferings of the saints gave efficacy to their prayers, and drew down the answer of Him who says, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee, and thou shalt glorify Me."[2] (4) The words of ver. 3, *the prayers of all the saints*, and the similar expression in ver. 4, remind us of the prayers of the fifth Seal, now swelled by the prayers of those New Testament saints who have been added to "the blessed fellowship" of the

[1] Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, INCENSE. [2] Ps. l. 15.

Old Testament martyrs. These prayers, it will be remembered, rose from beneath the altar of burnt-offering; and it is natural to think that the same altar is again alluded to in order to bring out the idea of a similar martyrdom. What we see, therefore, is an angel taking the prayers and adding to them much incense, so that we may behold them as they ascend up before God and receive His answer.

Further, it ought to be observed that the prayers referred to are for judgment upon sin. There is nothing to justify the supposition that they are partly for judgment upon, partly for mercy to, a sinful world. They are simply another form of the cry, "How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"[1] They are a cry that God will vindicate the cause of righteousness.[2]

The cry is heard, for the angel takes of the fire of the altar on which the saints had been sacrificed as an offering to God, and casts it into the earth, that it may consume the sin by which it had been kindled. The *lex talionis* again starts to view; not merely punishment, but retribution, the heaviest of all retribution, because it is accompanied by a convicted conscience, retribution in kind.

Everything is now ready for judgment, and *the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepare themselves to sound:—*

> And the first sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast into the earth: and the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up (viii. 7).

[1] Chap. vi. 10. [2] Comp. p. 103.

To think, in interpreting these words, of a literal burning up of a third part of the "earth," of the "trees," and of the "green grass," would lead us astray. Comparing the first Trumpet with those that follow, we have simply a general description of judgment as it affects the *land* in contradistinction to the sea, the rivers and fountains of water, and the heavenly bodies by which the earth is lighted. The punishment is drawn down by a guilty world upon itself when it rises in opposition to Him who at first prepared the land for the abode of men, planted it with trees pleasant to the eye, cast over it its mantle of green, and pronounced it to be very good. Of every tree of the garden, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, might our first parents eat; while grass covered the earth for their cattle, and herb for their service. All nature was to minister to the wants of man, and in cultivating the garden and the field he was to find light and happy labour. But sin came in. Thorns and thistles sprang up on every side. Labour became a burden, and the fruitful field was changed into a wilderness which could only be subdued by constant, patient, and often-disappointed toil. This is the thought—a thought often dwelt upon by the prophets of the Old Testament—that is present to the Seer's mind.

One of the plagues of Egypt, however, may also be in his eye. When the Almighty would deliver His people from that land of their captivity, "He sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous. . . . And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both

man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and broke every tree of the field."[1] That plague the Seer has in his mind; but he is not content to use its traits alone, terrible as they were. The sin of a guilty world in refusing to listen to Him who speaks from heaven is greater than was the sin of those who refused Him that spake on earth, and their punishment must be in proportion to their sin. Hence the plague of Egypt is magnified. We read, not of hail and fire only, but of *hail and fire mingled with* (or rather *in*) *blood*, so that the blood is the outward and visible covering of the hail and of the fire. In addition to this, we have the herbs and trees of the field, not merely smitten and broken, but utterly consumed by fire. What is meant by the "third part" of the earth and its products being attacked it is difficult to say. The probability is that, as a whole consists of three parts, partial destruction only is intended, yet not destruction of a third part of the earth, leaving two-thirds untouched; but a third part of the earth and of its produce is everywhere consumed.

The second Trumpet is now blown :—

> And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; and there died the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, even they that had life; and the third part of the ships was destroyed (viii. 8, 9).

As the first Trumpet affected the land, so the second affects *the sea;* and the remarks already made upon the one destruction are for the most part applicable to the other. The figure of removing a mountain from its place and casting it into the sea was used by our

[1] Exod. ix. 23-25.

Lord to express what beyond all else it was impossible to accomplish by mere human power: "Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do what is done to the fig tree, but even if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea, it shall be done."[1] In so speaking, our Lord had followed the language of the prophets, who were accustomed to illustrate by the thought of the removal of mountains the greatest acts of Divine power: "What art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain;" "Therefore will we not fear, though the mountains be carried into the midst of the seas."[2]

Even the figure of a "burnt mountain" is not strange to the Old Testament, for the prophet Jeremiah thus denounces woe on Babylon: "Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth: and I will stretch out Mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and make thee a burnt mountain."[3]

The plagues of Egypt, too, are again taken advantage of by the Seer, for in the first of these Moses "lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river; . . . and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt."[4] Here, however, the plague is extended, embracing as it does not only the river of Egypt, but the sea, with all the ships that sail upon it, and all its fish. Again also, as before, the "third part" is not to be thought of as confined to one

[1] Matt. xxi. 21.
[2] Zech. iv. 7; Ps. xlvi. 2.
[3] Jer. li. 25.
[4] Exod. vii. 20, 21.

region of the ocean, while the remaining two-thirds are left untouched. It is to be sought everywhere over the whole compass of the deep.

The third Trumpet is now blown :—

And the third angel sounded, and there fell from heaven a great star, burning as a torch, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of the waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter (viii. 10, 11).

The third Trumpet is to be understood upon the same principles and in the same general sense as the two preceding Trumpets. The figures are again such as meet us in the Old Testament, though they are used by the Seer in his own free and independent way. Thus the prophet Isaiah, addressing Babylon in his magnificent description of her fall, exclaims, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!"[1] and thus also the prophet Jeremiah denounces judgment upon rebellious Israel: "Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink."[2] The bitter waters of Marah also lived in the recollections of Israel as the first, and not the least terrible, punishment of the murmuring of their fathers against Him who had brought them out into what seemed but a barren wilderness, instead of leaving them to quench their thirst by the sweet waters of the Nile.[3] Thus the waters which the world offers to its votaries are made bitter, so bitter that they become wormwood itself, the very essence of bitterness. Again the "third part" of them is thus visited, but this time

[1] Isa. xiv. 12. [2] Jer. ix. 15. [3] Exod. xv. 23.

with a feature not previously mentioned: the destruction of human life,—*many men died of the waters.* Under the first Trumpet only inanimate nature was affected; under the second we rose to creatures that had life; under the third we rise to "many men." The climax ought to be noticed, as illustrating the style of the Apostle's thought and aiding us in the interpretation of his words. A similar climax may perhaps also be intended by the agents successively employed under these Trumpets: hail and fire, a great mountain burning, and a falling star.

The fourth Trumpet is now blown :—

And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; that the third part of them should be darkened, and the day should not shine for the third part of it, and the night in like manner (viii. 12).

This Trumpet offers no contradiction to what was previously said,—that the first four members of the three series of Seals, of Trumpets, and of Bowls deal with the material rather than the spiritual side of man, with man as a denizen of this world rather than of the next.[1] The heavenly bodies are here viewed solely in their relation to earth and its inhabitants. As to the judgment, it rests, like those of the first and second Trumpets, upon the thought of the Egyptian plague of darkness: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness that may be felt. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: they saw not one another, neither rose any

[1] Comp. p. 97.

from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had lights in their dwellings."[1] The trait of the Egyptian plague alluded to in this last sentence is not mentioned here; and we have probably, therefore, no right to say that it was in the Seer's thoughts. Yet it is in a high degree probable that it was; and at all events his obvious reference to that plague may help to illustrate an important particular to be afterwards noticed,—that all the Trumpet judgments fall directly upon the world, and not the Church. As under the first three Trumpets, the third part of the light of sun, and moon, and stars is alone darkened.

The first four Trumpets have now been blown, and we reach the line of demarcation by which each series of judgments is divided into its groups of four and three. That line is drawn in the present instance with peculiar solemnity and force:—

> And I saw, and I heard an eagle flying in mid-heaven, saying with a great voice, Woe, woe, woe, for them that dwell on the earth by reason of the other voices of the three angels who are yet to sound (viii. 13).

Attention ought to be paid to the fact that the cry uttered in *mid-heaven*, and thus penetrating to the most distant corners of the earth, proceeds from an *eagle*, and not, as in the Authorised Version, from an "angel;" and the eagle is certainly referred to for the purpose of adding fresh terror to the scene. If we would enter into the Seer's mind, we must think of it as the symbol of rapine and plunder. To him the prominent characteristic of that bird is not its majesty, but its swiftness, its strength, and its hasting to the prey.[2]

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[1] Exod. x. 21-23. [2] Comp. Job ix. 26.

Thus ominously announced, the fifth Trumpet is now blown:—

And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star out of heaven fallen unto the earth: and there was given to him the key of the well of the abyss. And he opened the well of the abyss; and there went up a smoke out of the well, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the well. And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth: and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was said unto them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads. And it was given them that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when it striketh a man. And in those days men shall seek death, and shall in no wise find it; and they shall desire to die, and death fleeth from them. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared for war, and upon their heads as it were crowns like unto gold, and their faces were as faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses rushing to war. And they have tails like unto scorpions, and stings: and in their tails is their power to hurt men five months. They have over them as king the angel of the abyss: his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek tongue he hath the name Apollyon (ix. 1-11).

Such is the strange but dire picture of the judgment of the fifth Trumpet; and we have, as usual, in the first place, to look at the particulars contained in it. As in several previous instances, these are founded upon the plagues of Egypt and the language of the prophets. In both these sources how terrible does a locust plague appear! In Egypt—"And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, even all that the hail hath left. And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the Lord

brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt."[1] Darker even than this is the language of the prophet Joel. When he sees locusts sweeping across a land, he exclaims, "The land was as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness;"[2] and from their irresistible and destructive ravages he draws not a few traits of the dread events by which the coming of the day of the Lord shall be accompanied: "The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. . . . They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks. . . . They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining."[3]

[1] Exod. x. 13-15. [2] Joel ii. 3. [3] Joel ii. 4-10.

It is no doubt true that in the description before us the qualities of its locusts are preternaturally magnified, but that is only what we might expect, and it is in keeping with the mode in which other figures taken from the Old Testament are treated in this book. There is a probability, too, that each trait of the description had a distinct meaning to St. John, and that it represents some particular phase of the calamities he intended to depict. But it is hardly possible now to discover such meanings; and that the Seer had in view general evil as much at least as evil in certain special *forms* is shown by the artificiality of structure marking the passage as a whole. For the description of the locusts is divided into three parts, the first general, the second special, the third the locust-king. The special characteristics of the insects, again, are seven in number: (1) *upon their heads as it were crowns like unto gold;* (2) *and their faces were as faces of men;* (3) *and they had hair as the hair of women;* (4) *and their teeth were as the teeth of lions;* (5) *and they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron;* (6) *and the sound of their wings was as the sound of many chariots;* (7) *and they have tails like unto scorpions, and stings.*

Whether the period of *five months*, during which these locusts are said to commit their ravages, is fixed on because the destruction caused by the natural insect lasts for that length of time, or for some other reason unknown to us, it is difficult to determine. There is a want of proof that a locust-plague generally continues for the number of months thus specified, and it is otherwise more in accordance with the style of the Apocalypse to regard that particular period of time as simply denoting that the judgment has definite limits.

One additional particular connected with the fifth Trumpet ought to be adverted to. It will be noticed that the *well of the abyss* whence the plague proceeds is opened by a *star fallen* (not "falling") *out of heaven*, to which *the key of the well was given.* We have here one of those contrasts of St. John a due attention to which is of such importance to the interpreter. This "fallen star" is the contrast and counterpart of Him who is "the bright, the morning star," and who "has the keys of death and of Hades."[1]

At this point the sixth angel ought to sound; but we are now in the midst of the three last woes, and each is of so terrible an import that it deserves to be specially marked. Hence the words of the next verse:—

> The first Woe is past; behold, there come yet two Woes hereafter (ix. 12).

This warning given, the sixth Trumpet is now blown:—

> And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the horns of the golden altar which is before God, one saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound at the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which had been prepared for the hour, and day, and month, and year, that they should kill the third part of men. And the number of the armies of the horsemen was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates as of fire, and of hyacinth, and of brimstone. By these three plagues was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and the smoke, and the brimstone, which proceeded out of their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails are like unto serpents, and with them they do hurt. And the rest of mankind which were not killed with these plagues repented not of the works of their hands, that

[1] Chaps. xxii. 16; i. 18.

they should not worship demons, and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood: which can neither see, nor hear nor walk: and they repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts (ix. 13-21).

There is much in this Trumpet that is remarkable even while we confine ourselves to the more outward particulars contained in it. Thus we are brought back by it to the thought of those prayers of the saints to which all the Trumpets are a reply, but which have not been mentioned since the blowing of the Trumpets began.[1] Once more we read of *the golden altar which was before God*, in His immediate presence. On that altar the prayers of all the saints had been laid, that they might rise to heaven with the much incense added by the angel, and might be answered in God's own time and way. The voice heard from *the four horns* of this altar—that is, from the four projecting points at its four corners, representing the altar in its greatest potency—shows us, what we might have been in danger of forgetting, that the judgment before us continues to be an answer of the Almighty to His people's prayers. Again it may be noticed that in the judgment here spoken of we deal once more with a *third part* of the class upon which it falls. Nothing of the kind had been said under the fifth Trumpet. The inference to be drawn from these particulars is important. We learn that, however distinct the successive members of any of the three series of the Seals, the Trumpets, or the Bowls may seem to be, they are yet closely connected with one another. Though seven in number, there is a sense in which they are also one; and any characteristic thought which appears in a single member

[1] Vers. 3-5.

of the series ought to be carried through all its members.[1]

The judgment itself is founded, as in the others already considered, upon thoughts and incidents connected with Old Testament history.

The first of these is the river Euphrates. That great river was the boundary of Palestine upon the north-east. "In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates;"[2] and in the days of Solomon this part of the covenant appears to have been fulfilled, for we are told that "Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river" (that is, the Euphrates) "unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt."[3] The Euphrates, however, was not only the boundary between Israel and the Assyrians. It was also Israel's line of defence against its powerful and ambitious neighbour, who had to cross its broad stream before he could seize any part of the Promised Land. By a natural transition of thought, the Euphrates next became a symbol of the Assyrians themselves, for its waters, when they rose in flood, overflowed Israel's territory and swept all before them. Then the prophets saw in the rush of the swollen river a figure of the scourge of God upon those who would not acknowledge Him: "The Lord spake also unto me again, saying, Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son; now therefore behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall

[1] Comp. p. 268. [2] Gen. xv. 18. [3] 1 Kings iv. 21.

come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: and he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of Thy land, O Immanuel."[1] When accordingly the Euphrates is here spoken of, it is clear that with the river as such we have nothing to do. It is simply a symbol of judgment; and *the four angels which had been bound at it*, but were now *loosed*, are a token—four being the number of the world—that the judgment referred to, though it affects but a third part of men, reaches men over the whole surface of the globe. When *the hour, and the day, and the month, and the year*—that is, when the moment fixed in the counsels of the Almighty —come, the chains by which destruction has been kept back shall be broken, and the world shall be overwhelmed by the raging stream.

The second Old Testament thought to be noted in this vision is that of *horses*. To the Israelite the horse presented an object of terror rather than admiration, and an army of horsemen awakened in him the deepest feelings of alarm. Thus it is that the prophet Habakkuk, describing the coming judgments of God, is commissioned to exclaim, "Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves. Their horses also are swifter

[1] Isa. viii. 5-8.

than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat. They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand. And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every stronghold; for they shall heap dust, and take it."[1] Like the locusts of the previous vision, the "horses" now spoken of are indeed clothed with preternatural attributes; but the explanation is the same. Ordinary horses could not convey images of sufficient terror.

The last two verses of chap. ix., which follow the sixth Trumpet, deserve our particular attention. They describe the effect produced upon the men who did not perish by the previous plagues, and they help to throw light upon a question most intimately connected with a just interpretation of the Apocalypse. The question is, Does the Seer, in any of his visions, anticipate the conversion of the ungodly? or does he deal, from the beginning to the end of his descriptions, with righteousness and sin in themselves rather than with righteous persons who may decline from the truth or sinful persons who may own and welcome it? The question will meet us again in the following chapters of this book, and will demand a fuller discussion than it can receive at present. In the meantime it is enough to say that, in the two verses now under consideration, no hint as to the conversion of any ungodly persons by the Trumpet plagues is given. On the contrary, the "men"—that is, the two-thirds of the inhabitants

[1] Hab. i. 5-10.

of the earth or of the ungodly world—who were not killed by these plagues repented neither of their irreligious principles nor of their immoral lives. They went on as they had done in the grossness of their idolatries and in the licentiousness of their conduct. They were neither awakened nor softened by the fate of others. They had deliberately chosen their own course; and, although they knew that they were rushing against the thick bosses of the Almighty's buckler, they had resolved to persevere in it to the end.

Two brief remarks on these six Trumpet visions, looked at as a whole, appear still to be required.

1. No attempt has been made to interpret either the individual objects of the judgments or the instruments by which judgment is inflicted. To the one class belong the "earth," the "trees," the "green grass," the "sea," the "ships," the "rivers and fountains of the waters," the "sun," the "moon," and the "stars;" to the other belong the details given in the description first of the "locusts" of the fifth Trumpet and then of the "horses" of the sixth. Each of these particulars may have a definite meaning, and interpreters may yet be successful in discovering it. The object kept in view throughout this commentary makes any effort to ascertain that meaning, when it is doubtful if it even exists, comparatively unimportant. We are endeavouring to catch the broader interpretation and spirit of the book; and it may be a question whether our impressions would in that respect be deepened though we saw reason to believe that all the objects above mentioned had individual force. One line of demarcation certainly seems to exist, traced by the Seer himself, between the first four and the two following judgments, the former referring to physical disasters flowing from

moral evil, the latter to the more dreadful intensification of intellectual darkness and moral corruption visited upon men when they deliberately choose evil rather than good. Further than this it is for our present purpose unnecessary to go.

2. The judgments of these Trumpets are judgments on *the world* rather than the Church. Occasion has been already taken to observe that the structure of this part of the Apocalypse leads to the belief that both the Trumpets and the Bowls are developed out of the Seals. Yet there is a difference between the two, and various indications in the Trumpet visions appear to confine them to judgments on the world.

There is the manner in which they are introduced, as an answer to the prayers of "all the saints."[1] It is true, as we shall yet see, that the degenerate Church is the chief persecutor of the people of God. But against her the saints cannot pray. To them she is still the Church. They remember the principle laid down by their Lord when He spoke of His kingdom in the parable of the tares: "Let both grow together until the harvest."[2] God alone can separate the false from the true within her pale. There is a sense in which the Church can never be overthrown, and there is not less a sense in which the world shall be subdued. Only for the subjugation of the world, therefore, can "all the saints" pray; and the Trumpets are an answer to their prayers.

Again, the three Woe-Trumpets are directed against "them that dwell on the earth."[3] But, as has been already said, it is a principle of interpretation applicable to all the three series of the Seals, the Trumpets, and

[1] Chap. viii. 3. [2] Matt. xiii. 30. [3] Chap. viii. 13.

the Bowls, that traits filling up the picture in one member belong also to the other members of the group, and that the judgments, while under one aspect seven, are under another one. The three Woes therefore fall upon the same field of judgment as that visited by the plagues preceding them. In other words, all the six plagues of this series of visions are inflicted upon "them that dwell on the earth;" and that is simply another form of expression for the ungodly world.

Again, under the fifth Trumpet the children of God are separated from the ungodly, so that the particulars of that judgment do not touch them. The locusts are instructed that *they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only such men as have not the seal of God in their foreheads.*[1]

Again, the seventh Trumpet, in which the series culminates, and which embodies its character as a whole, will be found to deal with judgment on the world alone: "The nations were roused to wrath, and Thy wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged," . . . and "the time to destroy them that destroy the earth."[2]

Finally, the description given at the end of the sixth Trumpet of those who were hardened rather than softened by the preceding judgments leads directly to the same conclusion: *And the rest of mankind which were not killed by these plagues repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood.*[3]

These considerations leave no doubt that the judgments of the Trumpets are judgments on the world. The Church, it is true, may also suffer from them, but not

[1] Chap. ix. 4. [2] Chap. xi. 18. [3] Chap. ix. 20.

in judgment. They may be part of her trial as she mixes with the world during her earthly pilgrimage. Trial, however, is not judgment. To the children of God it is the discipline of a Father's hand. In the midst of it the Church is safe, and it helps to ripen her for the fulness of the glory of her heavenly inheritance.

CHAPTER VII.

FIRST CONSOLATORY VISION.

REV. x.

AT the point now reached by us the regular progress of the Trumpet judgments is interrupted, in precisely the same manner as between the sixth and seventh Seals, by two consolatory visions. The first is contained in chap. x., the second in chap. xi. 1-13. At chap. xi. 14 the series of the Trumpets is resumed, reaching from that point to the end of the chapter.

And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, arrayed with a cloud: and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: and he had in his hand a little book-roll open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left upon the earth: and he cried with a great voice, as a lion roareth: and when he cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying, Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. And the angel which I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his right hand to heaven, and sware by Him that liveth for ever and ever, who created the heaven, and the things that are therein, and the earth, and the things that are therein, and the sea, and the things that are therein, that there shall be time no longer: but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which He declared to His servants the prophets. And the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard it again speaking with me, and saying, Go, take the book-roll which is open in the hand of the angel that standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the

angel, saying unto him that he should give me the little book-roll. And he saith unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey. And I took the little book-roll out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and when I had eaten it, my belly was made bitter. And they say unto me, Thou must prophesy again over many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings (x. 1-11).

Many questions of deep interest, and upon which the most divergent opinions have been entertained, meet us in connexion with this passage. To attempt to discuss these various opinions would only confuse the reader. It will be enough to allude to them when it seems necessary to do so. In the meantime, before endeavouring to discover the meaning of the vision, three observations may be made; one of a general kind, the other two bearing upon the interpretation of particular clauses.

1. Like almost all else in the Revelation of St. John, the vision is founded upon a passage of the Old Testament. "And when I looked," says the prophet Ezekiel, "behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein. . . . Moreover He said unto me, Son of man, eat what thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that roll. And He said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness. And He said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with My words unto them."[1]

2. In one expression of ver. 6 it is doubtful whether the translation of the Authorised and Revised Versions,

[1] Ezek. ii. 9; iii. 4.

or the marginal translation of the latter, ought to be adopted, whether we ought to read, "There shall be time" or "There shall be delay" no longer. But the former is not only the natural meaning of the original; it would almost seem, from the use of the same word in other passages of the Apocalypse,[1] that it is employed by St. John to designate the whole Christian age. That age is now at its very close. The last hour is about to strike. The drama of the world's history is about to be wound up. "For the Lord will execute His word upon the earth, finishing it and cutting it short."[2]

3. The last verse of the chapter deserves our attention for a moment: *And they say unto me, Thou must prophesy again over many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.* Although prophecy itself is spoken of in several passages of this book,[3] we read only once again of prophesying: when it is said in chap. xi. 3 of the two witnesses that they shall prophesy. A comparison of these passages will show that both words are to be understood in the sense of proclaiming the righteous acts and judgments of the Almighty. The prophet of the Apocalypse is not the messenger of mercy only, but of the just government of God.

From these subordinate points we hasten to questions more immediately concerning us in our effort to understand the chapter. Several such questions have to be asked.

1. Who is the angel introduced to us in the first verse of the vision? He is described as *another strong angel;* and, as the epithet "strong" has been so used

[1] Comp. chaps. vi. 11; xx. 3.
[2] Rom. ix. 28.
[3] Comp. chaps. i. 3; xxii. 7, 10, 18, 19.

only once before—in chap. v. 2, in connexion with the opening of the book-roll sealed with seven seals—we are entitled to conclude that this angel is said to be "another" in comparison with the angel there spoken of rather than with the many angels that surround the throne of God. But the "strong angel" in chap. v. is distinguished both from God Himself, and from the Lamb. In some sense, therefore, a similar distinction must be drawn here. On the other hand, the particulars mentioned of this angel lead directly to the conclusion not only that he has Divine attributes, but that he represents no other than that Son of man beheld by St. John in the first vision of his book. He is *arrayed with a cloud;* and in every passage of the Apocalypse where mention is made of such investiture, or in which a cloud or clouds are associated with a person, it is with the Saviour of the world as He comes to judgment.[1] Similar language marks also the other books of the New Testament.[2] *The rainbow was upon his head;* and the definite article employed takes us back, not to the rainbow spoken of in the book of Genesis, or to the rainbow which from time to time appears, a well-known object, in the sky, but to that of chap. iv. 3, where we have been told, in the description of the Divine throne, that "there was a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon." The words *his face was as the sun* do not of themselves prove that the reference is to chap. i. 16, where it is said of the One like unto a son of man that "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength;" but the

[1] Chaps. i. 7; xiv. 14–16. In chap. xi. 12 "the cloud" is the well-known cloud in which Christ ascended, and in which He comes to judgment.

[2] Matt. xxiv. 30; Mark xiii. 26; Luke xxi. 27; 1 Thess. iv. 17.

propriety of this reference is made almost indubitable by the mention of *his feet as pillars of fire*, for this last circumstance can only be an allusion to the trait spoken of in chap. i. 15, "And His feet like unto fine brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace." The combination of these particulars shows how close is the connexion between the "strong angel" of this vision and the Divine Redeemer; and the explanation of both the difference and the correspondence between the two is to be found in the remark previously made that in the Apocalypse the "angel" of any person or thing expresses that person or thing in action.[1] Here, therefore, we have the action of Him who is the Head, and King, and Lord of His Church.

2. In what character does the Lord appear? As to the answer to this question there can be no dubiety. He appears in judgment. The rainbow upon His head is indeed the symbol of mercy, but it is sufficiently accounted for by the fact that He is Saviour as well as Judge. So far is the Apocalypse from representing the ideas of judgment and mercy as incompatible with each other that throughout the whole book the most terrible characteristic of the former is its proceeding from One distinguished by the latter. If even in itself the Divine wrath is to be dreaded by the sinner, the dread which it ought to inspire reaches its highest point when we think of it as "the wrath of the Lamb." The other features of the description speak directly of judgment: the "cloud," the "sun," the "pillars of fire."

3. What notion are we to form of the contents of the *little book-roll?* They are certainly not the same as those of the book-roll of chap. v., although the word

[1] Comp. p. 25

here used for the roll, a diminutive from the other, may suggest the idea that there is an intimate connexion between the two books, and that the second, like the first, is full of judgment. Other circumstances mentioned lead to the same conclusion. Thus the *great voice, as a lion roareth*, cannot fail to remind us of the voice of "the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah" in chap. v. The thought of *the seven thunders* which *uttered their voices* deepens the impression, for in that number we have the general conception of thunder in all the varied terrors that belong to it; and, whatever the particulars uttered by the thunders were—a point into which it is vain to inquire, as the writing of them was forbidden—their general tone must have been that of judgment. But these thunders are a response to the strong angel as he was about to take action with the little book,—"*when he cried*, the seven thunders uttered their voices,"—and the response must have been related to the action. It is clear, therefore, that the contents of the little book cannot have been tidings of mercy to a sinful world; and that that book cannot have been intended to tell the Seer that, notwithstanding the opposition of the powers of darkness, the Church of Christ was to make her way among the nations, growing up from the small seed into the stately tree, and at last covering the earth with the shadow of her branches. Even on the supposition that a conception of this kind could be traced in other parts of the Apocalypse, it would be out of keeping with the particulars accompanying it here. We may without hesitation conclude that the little book-roll has thus the general character of judgment, although, like the larger roll of chap. v., it may also include in it the preservation of the saints.

We are thus in a position to inquire what the special contents of the little book-roll were. Before doing so one consideration may be kept in view.

Calling to mind the symmetrical structure of the Apocalypse, it seems natural to expect that the relation to one another of the two consolatory visions falling between the Trumpets and the Bowls will correspond to that of the two between the Seals and the Trumpets. The two companies, however, spoken of in these two latter visions, are the same, the hundred and forty and four thousand "out of every tribe of the children of Israel" being identical with the great multitude "out of every nation;" while the contents of the second vision are substantially the same as those of the first, though repeated on a fuller and more perfect scale. Now we shall shortly see that the second of our present consolatory visions—that in chap. xi.—brings out the victory and triumph of *a faithful remnant* of believers within a degenerate, though professing, Church. How probable does it become that the first consolatory vision—that in chap. x.—will relate to the same remnant, though on a lower plane alike of battle and of conquest!

Thus looked at, we have good ground for the supposition that the little book-roll contained indications of judgment about to descend on a Church which had fallen from her high position and practically disowned her Divine Master; while at the same time it assured the faithful remnant within her that they would be preserved, and in due season glorified. The little book thus spoke of the hardest of all the struggles through which believers have to pass: that with foes of their own household; but, so speaking, it told also of judgment upon these foes, and of a glorious issue for the true members of Christ's Body out of toil and suffering.

With this view of the contents of the little book-roll everything that is said of it appears to be in harmony.

1. We thus at once understand why it is named by a diminutive form of the word used for the book-roll in chap. v. The latter contained the whole counsel of God for the execution of His plans both in the world and in the Church. The former has reference to the Church alone. A smaller roll therefore would naturally be sufficient for its tidings.

2. The action which the Seer is commanded to take with the roll receives adequate explanation. He was to *take it* out of the hand of the strong angel and to *eat it up*. The meaning is obvious, and is admitted by all interpreters. The Seer is in his own actual experience to assimilate the contents of the roll in order that he may know their value. The injunction is in beautiful accord with what we otherwise know of the character and feelings of St. John. The power of Christian experience to throw light upon Christian truth and upon the fortunes of Christ's people is one of the most remarkable characteristics of the fourth Gospel. It penetrates and pervades the whole. We listen to the expression of the Evangelist's own feelings as he is about to present to the world the image of his beloved Master, and he cries, "*We* beheld His glory, glory as of the only-begotten from the Father;" "Of His fulness *we* all received, and grace for grace."[1] We notice his comment upon words of Jesus dark to his fellow-Apostles and himself at the time when they were spoken, and he says, "When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He spake this; and they believed the word which Jesus had said."[2]

[1] John i. 14, 16. [2] John ii. 22.

Finally, we hear him as he remembers the promise of the Spirit of truth, who was to instruct the disciples, not by new revelations of the Divine will, but by unfolding more largely the fulness that was to be found in Christ: "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth: for He shall not speak from Himself; but what things soever He shall hear, these shall He speak: and He shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you."[1] Everywhere and always Christian experience is the key that unlocks what would otherwise be closed, and sheds light upon what would otherwise be dark. To such experience, accordingly, the contents of the little roll, if they were such as we have understood them to be, must have appealed with peculiar power. In beholding judgment executed on the world, the believer might need only to stand by and wonder, as Moses and Israel stood upon the shore of the Red Sea when the sea, returning to its bed, overwhelmed their enemies. They were safe. They had neither part nor lot with those who were sinking as lead in the mighty waters. It would be otherwise when judgment came upon the Church. Of that Church believers were a part. How could they explain the change that had come over her, the purification that she needed, the separation that must take place within what had hitherto been to all appearance the one Zion which God loved? In the former case all was outward; in the latter all is inward, personal, experimental, leading to inquiry and earnest searchings of heart and prayer. A book containing these things

[1] John xvi. 13, 14.

was thus an appeal to Christian experience, and St. John might well be told to "eat it up."

3. The effect produced upon the Seer by eating the little roll is also in accord with what has been said. *It shall make thy belly bitter*, it was said to him, *but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey;* and the effect followed. *It was in my mouth*, he says, *sweet as honey: and when I had eaten it, my belly was made bitter.* Such an effect could hardly follow the mere proclamation of judgment on the world. When we look at that judgment in the light in which it ought to be regarded, and in which we have hitherto regarded it—as the vindication of righteousness and of a Divine and righteous order—the thought of it can impart nothing but joy. But to think that the Church of the living God, the bride of Christ, shall be visited with judgment, and to be compelled to acknowledge that the judgment is deserved; to think that those to whom so much has been given should have given so little in return; to think of the selfishness which has prevailed where love ought to have reigned, of worldliness where there ought to have been heavenliness of mind, and of discord where there ought to have been unity—these are the things that make the Christian's reflections "bitter;" they, and they most of all, are his perplexity, his burden, his sorrow, and his cross. The world may disappoint him, but from it he expected little. When the Church disappoints him, the "foundations are overturned," and the honey of life is changed into gall and wormwood.

Combining the particulars which have now been noticed, we seem entitled to conclude that the little book-roll of this chapter is a roll of judgment, but of judgment relating less to the world than to the Church. It tells us that that sad experience of hers which is to

meet us in the following chapters ought neither to perplex nor overwhelm us. The experience may be strange, very different from what we might have expected and hoped for; but the thread by which the Church is guided has not passed out of the hands of Him who leads His people by ways that they know not into the hands of an unsympathizing and hostile power. As His counsels in reference to the world, and to the Church in her general relation to it, contained in the great book-roll of chap. v., shall stand, so the internal relations of the two parts of His Church to each other, together with the issues depending upon them, are equally under His control. If judgment falls upon the Church, it is not because God has forgotten to be gracious, or has in anger shut up His tender mercies, but because the Church has sinned, because she is in need of chastisement, and because she must be taught that only in direct dependence upon the voice of the Good Shepherd, and not in the closest "fold" that can be built for her, is she safe. Let her "know" Him, and she shall be known of Him even as He is known of the Father.[1]

[1] Comp. John x. 1-15.

CHAPTER VIII.

SECOND CONSOLATORY VISION AND THE SEVENTH TRUMPET.

Rev. xi.

FROM the first consolatory vision we proceed to the second:—

And there was given unto me a reed like unto a rod: and one said, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. And the court which is without the temple cast without, and measure it not; for it hath been given unto the nations: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months (xi. 1, 2).

Various points connected with these verses demand examination before any attempt can be made to gather the meaning of the vision as a whole.

1. What is meant by the *measuring* of the Temple? As in so many other instances, the figure is taken from the Old Testament. In the prophet Zechariah we read, "I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand. Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof."[1] To the same effect, but still more particularly, the prophet Ezekiel speaks: "In the visions of God brought He me into

[1] Zech. ii. 1, 2.

the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south. And He brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate. . . . And behold a wall on the outside of the house round about, and in the man's hand a measuring reed of six cubits long by the cubit and an handbreadth, so he measured,"[1] whereupon follows a minute and lengthened description of the measuring of all the parts of that Temple which was to be the glory of God's people in the latter days. From these passages we not only learn whence the idea of the "measuring" was taken, but what the meaning of it was. The account given by Ezekiel distinctly shows that thus to measure expresses the thought of preservation, not of destruction. That the same thought is intended by Zechariah is clear from the words immediately following the instruction given him to measure: "For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her;"[2] while, if further proof upon this point were needed, it is found in the fact that the measuring of this passage does not stand alone in the Apocalypse. The new Jerusalem is also measured: "And he that spake with me had for a measure a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel."[3] When God therefore measures, He measures, not in indignation, but that the object measured may be in a deeper than ordinary sense the habitation of His glory.

[1] Ezek. xl. 2-5. [2] Zech. ii. 5. [3] Chap. xxi. 15, 17.

2. What is meant by *the temple, the altar*, and the *casting without of the court which is without the temple?* In other words, are we to interpret these objects and the action taken with the latter literally or figuratively? Are we to think of the things themselves, or of certain spiritual ideas which they are used to represent? The first view is not only that of many eminent commentators; it even forms one of the chief grounds upon which they urge that the Herodian temple upon Mount Moriah was still in existence when the Apocalyptist wrote. He could not, it is alleged, have been instructed to "measure" the Temple if that building had been already thrown down, and not one stone left upon another. Yet, when we attend to the words, it would seem as if this view must be set aside in favour of a figurative interpretation. For—

(1) The word "temple" misleads. The term employed in the original does not mean the Temple-buildings as a whole, but only their innermost shrine or sanctuary, that part known as the "Holy of holies," which was separated from every other part of the sacred structure by the second veil. No doubt, so far as the simple act of measuring was concerned, a part might have been as easily measured as the whole. But closer attention to what was in the Seer's mind will show that when he thus speaks of the *naos* or shrine he is not thinking of the Temple at Jerusalem at all, but of the Tabernacle in the wilderness upon which the Temple was moulded. The nineteenth verse of the chapter makes this clear. In that verse we find him saying, "And there was opened the temple" (the *naos*) "of God that is in heaven, and there was seen in His temple" (His *naos*) "the ark of His covenant." We know, however, that the ark of the covenant *never had* a place

in the Temple which existed in the days of Christ. It had disappeared at the destruction of the first Temple, long before that date. The Temple spoken of in the nineteenth verse is indeed said to be "in heaven;" and it may be thought that the ark, though not on earth, might have been seen there. But no reader of the Revelation of St. John can doubt that to him the sanctuary of God on earth was an exact representation of the heavenly sanctuary, that what God had given in material form to men was a faithful copy of the ideas of His spiritual and eternal kingdom. He could not therefore have placed in the original what, if he had before his mind the Temple at Jerusalem, he knew had no existence within its precincts; and the conclusion is irresistible that when he speaks of a *naos* that was to be measured he had turned his thoughts, not to the stone building upon Mount Moriah, but to its ancient prototype. On this ground alone then, even could no other be adduced, we seem entitled to maintain that a literal interpretation of the word "temple" is here impossible.

(2) Even should it be allowed that the sanctuary and the altar might be measured, the injunction is altogether inapplicable to the next following clause: *them that worship therein.* And it is peculiarly so if we adopt the natural construction, by which the word "therein" is connected with the word "altar." We cannot literally speak of persons worshipping "in" an altar. Nay, even though we connect "therein" with "the temple," the idea of measuring *persons* with a rod is at variance with the realities of life and the ordinary use of human language. A figurative element is thus introduced into the very heart of the clause the meaning of which is in dispute.

(3) A similar observation may be made with regard to the words *cast without* in ver. 2. The injunction has reference to the outer court of the Temple, and the thought of "casting out" such an extensive space is clearly inadmissible. So much have translators felt this that both in the Authorised and Revised Versions they have replaced the words "cast without" by the words "leave without." The outer court of the Temple could not be "cast out;" therefore it must be "left out." The interpretation thus given, however, fails to do justice to the original, for, though the word employed does not always include actual violence, it certainly implies action of a more positive kind than mere letting alone or passing by. More than this. We are under a special obligation in the present instance not to strip the word used by the Apostle of its proper force, for we shall immediately see that, rightly interpreted, it is one of the most interesting expressions of his book, and of the greatest value in helping us to determine the precise nature of his thought. In the meanwhile it is enough to say that the employment of the term in the connexion in which it here occurs is at variance with a simply literal interpretation.

(4) It cannot be denied that almost every other expression in the subsequent verses of the vision is figurative or metaphorical. If we are to interpret this part literally, it will be impossible to apply the same rule to other parts; and we shall have such a mixture of the literal and metaphorical as will completely baffle our efforts to comprehend the meaning of the Seer.

(5) We have the statement from the writer's own lips that, at least in speaking of Jerusalem, he is not to be literally understood. In ver. 8 he refers to "the great

city, which *spiritually* is called Sodom and Egypt." The hint thus given as to one point of his description may be accepted as applicable to it all.

We conclude, therefore, that the "measuring," the "temple" or *naos*, the "altar," the "court which is without," and the "casting without" of the latter are to be regarded as figurative.

3. Our third point of inquiry is, What is the meaning of the figure? There need be no hesitation as to the things first spoken of: "the temple, the altar, and them that worship therein." These, the most sacred parts of the Temple-buildings, can only denote the most sacred portion of the true Israel of God. They are those disciples of Christ who constitute His shrine, His golden altar of incense whence their prayers rise up continually before Him, His worshippers in spirit and in truth. These, as we have already often had occasion to see, shall be preserved safe amidst the troubles of the Church and of the world. In one passage we have been told that they are numbered[1]; now we are further informed that they are measured.

It is more difficult to explain who are meant by "the court which is without the temple." But three things are clear. First, they are a part of the Temple-buildings, although not of its inner shrine. Secondly, they belong to Jerusalem; and Jerusalem, notwithstanding its degenerate condition, was still the city of God, standing to Him in a relation different from that of the "nations," even when it had sunk beneath them and had done more to merit His displeasure. Thirdly, they cannot be the Gentiles, for from them they are manifestly distinguished when it is said that the outer court "hath been given

[1] John vii. 4.

unto *the nations:* and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months."[1] One conclusion alone remains. The "court that is without" must symbolize the faithless portion of the Christian Church, such as tread the courts of the house of God, but to whom He speaks as He spoke to Jerusalem of old: "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hateth: they are a trouble unto Me; I am weary to bear them."[2]

The correctness of the sense thus assigned to this part of the vision is powerfully confirmed by what appears to be the true foundation of the singular expression already so far spoken of, "cast without." Something must lie at the bottom of the figure; and nothing seems so probable as this: that it is the "casting out" which took place in the case of the man blind from his birth, and the opening of whose eyes by Jesus is related in the fourth Gospel. Of that man we are told that when the Jews could no longer answer him "they cast him out."[3] The word is the same as that now employed, and the thought is most probably the same also. Excommunication from the synagogue is in the Seer's mind, not a temporal punishment, not a mere worldly doom, but a spiritual sentence depriving of spiritual privileges misunderstood and abused. Such a casting out, however, can apply only to those who had been once within the courts of the Lord's house or to the faithless members of the Christian Church. They, like the Jews of old, would "cast out" the

[1] Ver. 2. [2] Isa. i. 13, 14. [3] John ix. 34.

humble disciples whom Jesus "found";[1] and He cast them out.

If the explanation now given of the opening verses of this chapter be correct, we have reached a very remarkable stage in these apocalyptic visions. For the first time, except in the letters to the churches,[2] we have a clear line of distinction drawn between the professing and the true portions of the Church of Christ, or, as it may be otherwise expressed, between the "called" and the "chosen."[3] How far the same distinction will meet us in later visions of this book we have yet to see. For the present it may be enough to say that the drawing of such a distinction corresponds exactly with what we might have been prepared to expect. Nothing can be more certain than that in the things actually around him St. John beheld the mould and type of the things that were to come. Now Jerusalem, the Church of God in Israel, contained two classes within its walls: those who were accomplishing their high destiny and those by whom that destiny was misunderstood, despised, and cast away. Has it not always been the same in the Christian Church? If the world entered into the one, has it not entered as disastrously into the other? That field which is "the kingdom of heaven" upon earth has never wanted tares as well as wheat. They grow together, and no man may separate them. When the appropriate moment comes, God Himself will give the word; angels will carry off the tares, and the great Husbandman will gather the wheat into His garner.

4. One question still remains: What is the meaning of the *forty and two months* during which the holy

[1] John ix. 35. [2] Chaps. ii. 24; iii. 1, 4. [3] Comp. Matt. xxii. 14.

city is to be trodden under foot of the nations? The same expression meets us in chap. xiii. 5, where it is said that "there was given to the beast authority to continue forty and two months." But forty and two months is also three and a half years, the Jewish year having consisted of twelve months, except when an intercalary month was inserted among the twelve in order to preserve harmony between the seasons and the rotation of time. The same period is therefore again alluded to in chap. xii. 14, when it is said of the woman who fled into the wilderness that she is there nourished for "a time, and times, and half a time." Once more, we read in chap. xi. 3 and in chap. xii. 6 of a period denoted by "a thousand two hundred and threescore days;" and a comparison of this last passage with ver. 14 of the same chapter distinctly shows that it is equivalent to the three and a half times or years. Three and a half multiplied by three hundred and sixty, the number of days in the Jewish year, gives us exactly the twelve hundred and sixty days. These three periods, therefore, are the same. Why the different designations should be adopted is another question, to which, so far as we are aware, no satisfactory reply has yet been given, although it may be that, for some occult reason, the Seer beholds in "months" a suitable expression for the dominion of evil, in "days" one appropriate to the sufferings of the good.

The ground of this method of looking at the Church's history is found in the book of Daniel, where we read of the fourth beast, or the fourth kingdom, "And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given

into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time."[1] The same book helps us also to answer the question as to the particular period of the Church's history denoted by the days, or months, or years referred to, for in another passage the prophet says, "And He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease."[2] The three and a half years therefore, or the half of seven years, denote the whole period extending from the cessation of the sacrifice and oblation. In other words, they denote the Christian era from its beginning to its close, and that more especially on the side of its disturbed and broken character, of the power exercised in it by what is evil, of the troubles and sufferings of the good. During it the disciples of the Saviour do not reach the completeness of their rest; their victory is not won. Ideally it is so; it always has been so since Jesus overcame: but it is not yet won in the actual realities of the case; and, though in one sense every heavenly privilege is theirs, their difficulties are so great, and their opponents so numerous and powerful, that the true expression for their state is a broken seven years, or three years and a half. During this time, accordingly, the holy city is represented as trodden under foot by the nations. They who are at ease in Zion may not feel it; but to the true disciples of Jesus their Master's prophecy is fulfilled, "In the world ye shall have tribulation."[3]

The vision now proceeds :—

And I will give power unto My two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

[1] Dan. vii. 25. [2] Dan. ix. 27. [3] John xvi. 33.

These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the Lord of the earth. And if any man desireth to hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man shall desire to hurt them, in this manner must he be killed. These have the power to shut the heaven, that it rain not during the days of their prophecy: and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they shall desire. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that cometh up out of the abyss shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them. And their dead body lies in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. And from among the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations do men look upon their dead body three days and an half, and suffer not their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. And they that dwell on the earth rejoice over them, and make merry: and they shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth. And after the three days and an half the breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which beheld them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they went up into heaven in the cloud; and their enemies beheld them. And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell; and there were killed in the earthquake seven thousand persons: and the rest were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven (xi. 3-13).

The figures of this part of the vision, like those of the first part, are drawn from the Old Testament. That the language is not to be literally understood hardly admits of dispute, for, whatever might have been thought of the "two witnesses" had we read only of them, the description given of their persons, or of their person (for in ver. 8, where mention is made of their *dead body*—not "bodies"—they are treated as one), of their work, of their death, and of their resurrection and ascension, is so obviously figurative as to render it necessary to view the whole passage in that light. The main elements of the figure are supplied by the prophet Zechariah. "And the angel that talked with me," says the prophet, "came again, and waked me, as

a man that is wakened out of sleep, and said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof. So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord? . . . Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it. . . . Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof? And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? And he answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth."[1] In these words indeed we read only of one golden candlestick, while now we read of two. But we have already found that the Seer of the Apocalypse, in using the figures to which he had been accustomed, does not bind himself to all their details; and the only inference to be drawn from this difference, as well as from the circumstance already noted in ver. 8, is that the number "two" is to be

[1] Zech. iv.

regarded less in itself than as a strengthening of the idea of the number one. This circumstance further shows that the two witnesses cannot be divided between the two olive trees and the two candlesticks, as if the one witness were the former and the other the latter. Both taken together express the idea of witnessing, and to the full elucidation of that idea belong also the olive tree and the candlestick. The witnessing is fed by perpetual streams of that heavenly oil, of that unction of the Spirit, which is represented by the olive tree; and it sheds light around like the candlestick. The two witnesses, therefore, are not two individuals to be raised up during the course of the Church's history, that they may bear testimony to the facts and principles of the Christian faith. The Seer indeed may have remembered that it had been God's plan in the past to commission His servants, not singly, but in pairs. He may have called to mind Moses and Aaron, Joshua and Caleb, Elijah and Elisha, Zerubbabel and Joshua, or he may have thought of the fact that our Lord sent forth His disciples two by two. The probability, however, is that, as he speaks of "witnessing," he thought mainly of that precept of the law which required the testimony of two witnesses to confirm a statement. Yet he does not confine himself to the thought of two individual witnesses, however eminent, who shall in faithful work fill up their own short span of human life and die. The witness he has in view is that to be borne by all Christ's people, everywhere, and throughout the whole Christian age. From the first to the last moment of the Church's history in this world there shall be those raised up who shall never fail to *prophesy*, or, in other words, to testify to the truth of God as it is in Jesus. The task will be hard,

but they will not shrink from it. They shall be *clothed in sackcloth*, but they shall count their robes of shame to be robes of honour. They shall occupy the position of Him who, in the days of His humiliation, was the "faithful and true Witness." Nourished by the Spirit that was in Him, they shall, like Him, be the light of the world,[1] so that God shall never be left without some at least to witness for Him.

Having spoken of the persons of the two witnesses, St. John next proceeds to describe the power with which, amidst their seeming weakness, their testimony is borne; and once more he finds in the most striking histories of the Old Testament the materials with which his glowing imagination builds.

In the first place, *fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies*, so that these enemies are *killed* by the manifest judgment of God, and even, in His righteous retribution, by the very instrument of destruction they would have themselves employed. Elijah and the three companions of Daniel are before us, when at the word of Elijah fire descended out of heaven, and consumed the two captains and their fifties,[2] and when the companions of Daniel were not only left unharmed amidst the flames, but when the fire leaped out upon and slew the men by whom they had been cast into the furnace.[3] This fire proceeding out of the mouth of the two witnesses is like the sharp two-edged sword proceeding out of the mouth of the Son of man in the first vision of the book.[4] In the second place, the witnesses *have the power to shut the heaven, that it rain not during the days of their prophecy.* Elijah is again

[1] John viii. 12. Comp. Matt. v. 14.
[2] 2 Kings i. 10, 12.
[3] Dan. iii. 22.
[4] Chap. i. 16.

before us when he exclaimed in the presence of Ahab, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word," and when "it rained not on the earth for three years and six months."[1] Finally, when we are told that the witnesses *have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they shall desire,* we are reminded of Moses and of the plagues inflicted through him upon the oppressors of Israel in Egypt.

The three figures teach the same lesson. No deliverance has been effected by the Almighty for His people in the past which He is not ready to repeat. The God of Moses, and Elijah, and Daniel is the unchangeable Jehovah. He has made with His Church an everlasting covenant; and the most striking manifestations of His power in bygone times "happened by way of example, and were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come."[2]

Hence, accordingly, the Church *finishes her testimony.*[3] So was it with our Lord in His high-priestly prayer and on the Cross: "I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do;" "It is finished."[4] But this "finishing" of their testimony on the part of the two witnesses points to more than the end of the three and a half years viewed simply as a period of time. Not the thought of time alone, but of the completion of testimony, is present to the Seer's mind. At every moment in the history of Christ's true disciples that completion is reached by some or others of their number. Through

[1] 1 Kings xvii. 1; James v. 17. [2] 1 Cor. x. 11.
[3] Ver. 7. [4] John xvii. 4; xix. 30.

all the three and a half years their testimony is borne with power, and is finished with triumph, so that the world is always without excuse.

Having spoken of the power of the witnesses, St. John next turns to the thought of their evil fate. *The beast that cometh up out of the abyss shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them.* This "beast" has not yet been described; but it is a characteristic of the Apostle, both in the fourth Gospel and in the Apocalypse, to anticipate at times what is to come, and to introduce persons to our notice whom we shall only learn to know fully at a later point in his narrative. That is the case here. This beast will again meet us in chap. xiii. and chap. xvii., where we shall see that it is the concentrated power of a world material and visible in its opposition to a world spiritual and invisible. It may be well to remark, too, that the representation given of the beast presents us with one of the most striking contrasts of St. John, and one that must be carefully remembered if we would understand his visions. Why speak of its "coming up out of the abyss"? Because the beast is the contrast of the *risen* Saviour. Only after His resurrection did our Lord enter upon His dominion as King, Head, and Guardian of His people. In like manner only after a resurrection mockingly attributed to it does this beast attain its full range of influence. Then, in the height of its rage and at the summit of its power, it sets itself in opposition to Christ's witnesses. It cannot indeed prevent them from accomplishing their work; they shall finish their testimony in spite of it: but, when that is done, it shall gain an apparent triumph. As the Son of God was nailed to the Cross, and in that hour of His weakness seemed to be conquered by the

world, so shall it be with them. They shall be overcome and killed.

Nor is that all, for their *dead body* (not *dead bodies*[1]) is treated with the utmost contumely. It lies in the broad open street of *the great city*, which the words *where also their Lord was crucified* show plainly to be Jerusalem. But Jerusalem! In what aspect is she here beheld? Not as "the holy city," "the beloved city," the Zion which God had desired for His habitation, and of which He had said, "This is My rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it,"[2] but degenerate Jerusalem, Jerusalem become as Sodom for its wickedness, and as Egypt for its oppression of the Israel of God. The language is strong, so strong that many interpreters have deemed it impossible to apply it to Jerusalem in any sense, and have imagined that they had no alternative but to think of Rome. Yet it is not stronger than the language used many a time by the prophets of old: "Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. How is the faithful city become an harlot! . . . righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers."[3]

If, however, this city be Jerusalem, what does it represent? Surely, for reasons already stated, neither the true disciples of Jesus, nor the heathen nations of the world. We have the degenerate Church before us, the Church that has conformed to the world. That Church beholds the faithful witnesses for Christ the Crucified lie in the open way. Their wounds make no impression upon her heart, and draw no tear from her eyes. She even invites the world to the spectacle;

[1] See margin of R.V. [2] Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14. [3] Isa. i. 10, 21.

and the world, always eager to hear the voice of a degenerate Church, responds to the invitation. It "looks," and obviously without commiseration, upon the prostrate, mangled form that has fallen in the strife. This it does for three days and a half, the half of seven, a broken period of trouble; and it will not suffer the dead body to be laid in a tomb. Nay, the world is not content even with its victory. After victory it must have its triumph; and that triumph is presented to us in one of the most wonderful pictures of the Apocalypse, when *they that dwell on the earth*—that is, the men of the world—*from among the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations*, having listened to the degenerate Church's call, make high holiday at the thought of what they have done. They *rejoice over the dead bodies, and make merry: and they send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth.* We are reminded of Herod and Pilate, who, when the Jewish governor sent Jesus to his heathen brother, "became friends that very day."[1] But we are reminded of more. In the book of Nehemiah we find mention of that great feast of Tabernacles which was observed by the people when they heard again, after long silence, the book of the law, and when "there was very great gladness." In immediate connexion with this feast, Nehemiah said to the people, "Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto the Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength"[2]; while it constituted a part also of the joyful ceremonial of the feast of the dedication

[1] Luke xxiii. 12. [2] Neh. viii. 10.

of the Temple that the Jews made the days of the feast "days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor."[1] Taking these passages into account, and remembering the general style and manner of St. John, we can have no hesitation in recognising in the festival of these verses the world's Feast of Tabernacles, the contrast and the counterpart of the Church's feast already spoken of in the second consolatory vision of chap. vii.

If so, what a picture does it present!—the degenerate Church inviting the world to celebrate a feast over the dead bodies of the witnesses for Christ, and the world accepting the invitation; the former accommodating herself to the ways of the latter, and the latter welcoming the accommodation; the one proclaiming no unpleasant doctrines and demanding no painful sacrifices, the other hailing with satisfaction the prospect of an easy yoke and of a cheap purchase of eternity as well as time. The picture may seem too terrible to be true. But let us first remember that, like all the pictures of the Apocalypse, it is ideal, showing us the operation of principles in their last, not their first, effect; and then let us ask whether we have never read of, or ourselves seen, such a state of things actually realized. Has the Church never become the world, on the plea that she would gain the world? Has she never uttered smooth things or prophesied deceits in order that she might attract those who will not endure the thought of hardness in religious service, and would rather embrace what in their inward hearts they know to be a lie than bitter truth? Such a spectacle has been often witnessed, and is yet witnessed every day,

[1] Esther ix. 22.

when those who ought to be witnesses for a living and present Lord gloze over the peculiar doctrines of the Christian faith, draw as close as possible the bonds of their fellowship with unchristian men, and treat with scorn the thought of a heavenly life to be led even amidst the things of time. One can understand the world's own ways, and, even when lamenting that its motives are not higher, can love its citizens and respect their virtues. But a far lower step in declension is reached when the Church's silver becomes dross, when her wine is mixed with water, and when her voice no longer convicts, no longer "torments them that dwell on the earth."

In the midst of all their tribulation, however, the faithful portion of the Church have a glorious reward. They have suffered with Christ, but they shall also reign with Him. After all their trials in life, after their death, and after the limited time during which even when dead they have been dishonoured, they live again. *The breath of life from God entered into them.* Following Him who is the first-fruits of them that sleep, they *stood upon their feet.*[1] They *heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither.* They *went up into heaven in the cloud;* and there they sit down with the conquering Redeemer in His throne, even as He overcame and sat down with His Father in His throne.[2] All this, too, takes place in the very presence of their enemies, upon whom *great fear fell.* Even nature sympathizes with them. Having waited for the revealing of the sons of God, and in hope that she also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God,[3]

[1] Comp. chap. v. 6. [2] Chap. iii. 21. [3] Rom. viii. 19, 21.

she hails their final triumph. *There was a great earthquake, the tenth part of the city* (that is, of Jerusalem) *fell; and there were killed in the earthquake seven thousand persons.* It is unnecessary to say that the words are figurative and symbolical, denoting in all probability simply judgment, but judgment restrained.

The last words of the vision alone demand more particular attention: *The rest were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.* The thought is the same as that which met us when we were told at the close of the sixth Trumpet that "the rest of mankind which were not killed with these plagues repented not."[1] There is no repentance, no conversion. There is terror; there is alarm; there is a tribute of awe to the God of heaven who has so signally vindicated His own cause; but there is nothing more. Nor are we told what may or may not follow in some future scene. For the Seer the final triumph of good and the final overthrow of evil are enough. He can be patient, and, so far as persons are concerned, can leave the issue in the hands of God.

The two consolatory visions interposed between the sixth and seventh Trumpets are now over, and we cannot fail to see how great an advance they are upon the two visions of a similar kind interposed between the sixth and seventh Seals. The whole action has made progress. At the earlier stage the Church may be said to have been hidden in the hollow of the Almighty's hand. In the thought of the "great tribulation" awaiting her she has been sealed, while the peace and joy of her new condition have been set before us, as she neither hungers nor thirsts, but is

[1] Chap. ix. 20.

guided by her Divine Shepherd to green pastures and to fountains of the waters of life. At this later stage she is in the midst of her conflict and her sufferings. She is in the heat of her warfare, in the extremity of her persecuted state. From the height on which we stand we do not look over a quiet and peaceful plain, with flocks of sheep resting in its meadows; we look over a field where armed men have met in the shock of battle. There is the stir, the excitement, the tumult of deadly strife for higher than earthly freedom, for dearer than earthly homes. There may be temporary repulse and momentary yielding even on the side of the good, but they still press on. The Captain of their salvation is at their head; and foot by foot fresh ground is won, until at last the victory is sounded, and we are ready for the seventh Trumpet.

Before it sounds there is a warning similar to that which preceded the sounding of the fifth and sixth[1]:—

The second Woe is past; behold, the third Woe cometh quickly (xi. 14).

These words are to be connected with the close of chap. ix., all that is contained in chaps. x. and xi. 1-13 being, as we have seen, episodical.

The seventh Trumpet is now sounded:—

And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever. And the four-and-twenty elders, which sit before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give Thee thanks, O Lord, God, the Almighty, which art and which wast; because Thou hast taken Thy great power, and didst reign. And the nations were roused to wrath, and Thy wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to Thy

[1] Chaps. viii. 13; ix. 12.

servants the prophets, both the saints and them that fear Thy name, the small and the great, and to destroy them that destroy the earth. And there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His covenant: and there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail (xi. 15-19).

1. By *the kingdom of the world* here spoken of is meant, that dominion over the world as a whole has become the possession of our Lord and of His Christ; and it is to be His for ever and ever. There is no contradiction between this statement of St. John and that of St. Paul when, speaking of the Son, the latter Apostle says, "And when all things have been subjected unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subjected to Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God may be all in all."[1] The "kingdom" thus spoken of by St. Paul is that exercised by our Lord in subduing His enemies, and it must necessarily come to an end when there are no more enemies to subdue. The kingdom here referred to is Christ's dominion as Head and King of His Church, and of that dominion there is no end. Of more consequence perhaps is it to observe that when it is said in the words before us, *The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ*, there is nothing to lead to the supposition that this "kingdom" becomes Christ's by the conversion of the world. The meaning simply is that evil has been finally and for ever put down, that good is finally and for ever triumphant. No inference can be drawn as to the fate of wicked persons further than this: that they shall not be found in "the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."[2] Were additional proof needed

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 28. [2] 2 Pet. iii. 13.

pon this point, it would be supplied by the fact that in almost the next following words we read of *the nations being roused to wrath*. These are the wicked upon whom judgment falls; and, instead of being converted, they are roused to the last and highest outburst of the wickedness which springs from despair.

2. The song of the four-and-twenty elders. We have already had occasion to notice that song of the representatives of redeemed creation in which the four living creatures celebrated "the Lord, God, the Almighty, which was and which is and which is to come."[1] The song now before us, sung by the representatives of the glorified Church, is cast in precisely the same mould of three ascriptions of praise to *the Lord*. But in the third member there is an important difference, the words "and which is to come" being omitted. The explanation is that the Lord is come. The present dispensation is at its close.

3. The events of the close are next described. It is *the time of the dead to be judged*, and the time *to give reward* to God's faithful servants, to whatever part of mankind they have belonged, and whatever the position they have filled in life. The whole family of man is divided into two great classes, and for the one there is judgment, for the other reward.

4. Before passing on it may be well to call attention to one or two particulars in these verses which, though not specially connected with that general meaning of the passage which it is the main object of this commentary to elicit, may help to throw light upon the style of the Apostle and the structure of his work.

(1) Thus it is important to observe his use of the

[1] Chap. iv. 8.

word *prophets*. The persons spoken of are obviously in contrast with "the nations" and "the dead to be judged," and they must include all who are faithful unto death. Already we have seen that every true follower of Christ is in St. John's eyes a martyr, and that when he thinks of the martyrs of the Church he has a far wider circle in view than that of those who meet death by the sword or at the stake.[1] To his ideal conceptions of things the martyr spirit makes the martyr, and the martyr spirit must rule in every disciple of the Crucified. In like manner the prophetic spirit makes the prophet, and of that spirit no true follower of Him in whom prophecy culminated can be devoid. In this very chapter we have read of "prophesying" as the work of the two witnesses who are a symbol of the whole Christian Church, and who prophesy through the thousand two hundred and threescore days of her pilgrimage. We are not therefore to suppose that those here called "prophets" are either prophets in the stricter sense of the word, or commissioned ministers of Christ. All Christ's people are His "servants the prophets," and the idealism of St. John distinctly appears in the designation given them.

(2) The next following clause, which we have translated in a manner slightly different from that of both the Authorised and the Revised Versions, is not less important: *both the saints and them that fear Thy name*, instead of "and to the saints, and to them that fear Thy name." It is the manner of St. John to dwell in the first instance upon one characteristic of the object of which he speaks, and then to add other

[1] Comp. p. 108.

characteristics belonging to it, equally important, it may be, in themselves, but not occupying so prominent a place in the line of thought which he happens to be pursuing at the moment. An illustration of this is afforded in John xiv. 6, where the words of Jesus are given in the form, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life." The context shows that the emphasis rests wholly on Jesus as "the Way," and that the addition of the words "the Truth, and the Life," is only made to enhance and complete the thought. Here in like manner the contents of what is involved in the term "the prophets" are completed by a further statement of what the prophets are. They are "the saints and they that fear God's name." The twofold structure of this statement, however, again illustrates the manner of St. John. "The saints" is, properly speaking, a Jewish epithet, while every reader of the Acts of the Apostles is familiar with the fact that "they that fear God" was a term applied to Gentile proselytes to Judaism. We have thus an instance of St. John's method of regarding the topic with which he deals from a double point of view, the first Jewish, the second Gentile. He is not thinking of two divisions of the Church. The Church is one; all her members constitute one Body in Christ. But looked at from the Jewish standpoint, they are "the saints;" from the Gentile, they are those that "fear Thy name."

(3) The verses under consideration afford a marked illustration of St. John's love of presenting judgment under the form of the *lex talionis*. The nations were "roused to wrath," and upon them God's "wrath came." They had "destroyed the earth," and God would "destroy" them. In studying the Apocalypse, all peculiarities of style or structure ought to be present

to the mind. They are not unfrequently valuable guides to interpretation.

The seventh Trumpet has sounded, and the end has come. A glorious moment has been reached in the development of the Almighty's plan; and the mind of the Seer is exalted and ravished by the prospect. Yet he beholds no passing away of the present earth and heavens, no translation of the reign of good to an unseen spiritual and hitherto unvisited region of the universe. It would be out of keeping with the usual phraseology of his book to understand by *heaven*, in which he sees the ark of God's covenant, a locality, a place "beyond the clouds and beyond the tomb." His employment of the contrasted words "earth" and "heaven" throughout his whole series of visions rather leads to the supposition that by the latter we are to understand that region, wherever it may be, in which spiritual principles alone bear sway. It may be here; it may be elsewhere; it seems hardly possible to say: but the more the reader enters into the spirit of this book, the more difficult will he find it to resist the impression that St. John thinks of this present world as not only the scene of the great struggle between good and evil, but also, when it has been cleansed and purified, as the seat of everlasting righteousness. These in the present instance are striking words: "to destroy them that destroy the earth." Why not destroy the earth itself if it is only to be burned up? Why speak of it in such terms as lead almost directly to the supposition that it shall be preserved though its destroyers perish? While, on the other hand, if God at first pronounced it to be "very good;" if it may be a home of truth, and purity, and holiness; and if it shall be the scene of Christ's future

and glorious reign,—then may we justly say, Woe to them that destroy the habitation, the palace, now preparing for the Prince of peace.

However this may be, it was a fitting close to the judgments of the seven Trumpets that the "temple" of God—that is, the innermost shrine or sanctuary of His temple—should be opened. There was no need now that God should be "a God that hideth Himself."[1] When earth had in it none but the pure in heart, why should they not see Him?[2] He would dwell in them and walk in them.[3] The Tabernacle of the Lord would be again with men.[4]

When too the shrine was opened, what more appropriate spectacle could be seen than "the ark of His covenant," the symbol of His faithfulness, the pledge of that love of His which remains unchanged when the mountains depart and the hills are removed? The covenant-keeping God! No promise of the past had failed, and the past was the earnest of the future.

Nor need we wonder at the *lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and the earthquake, and the great hail* that followed. For God had "promised, saying, Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which are not shaken may remain."[5]

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[1] Isa. xlv. 15.
[2] Matt. v. 8.
[3] 2 Cor. vi. 16.
[4] Chap. xxi. 3.
[5] Heb. xii. 26, 27.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIRST GREAT ENEMY OF THE CHURCH.

REV. xii.

THE twelfth chapter of the Revelation of St. John has been felt by every commentator to be one more than usually difficult to interpret, and that whether we look at it in relation to its special purpose, or to its position in the structure of the book. If we can satisfy ourselves as to the first of these two points, we shall be better able to form correct notions as to the second.

Turning then for a moment to chap. xiii., we find it occupied with a description of two of the great enemies with which the Church has to contend. These are spoken of as "a beast" (ver. 1) and "another beast" (ver. 11), the latter being obviously the same as that described in chap. xix. 20 as "the false prophet that wrought the signs" in the sight of the former. At the same time, it is evident that these two beasts are regarded as enemies of the Church in a sense peculiar to themselves, for the victorious Conqueror of chap. xix. makes war with them, and "they twain are cast into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone."[1] This fate next overtakes, in chap. xx. 10, "the dragon, the old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan," so that no

[1] Chap. xix. 20.

doubt can rest upon the fact that to St. John's view the great enemies of the Church are three in number. When, accordingly, we find two of them described in chap. xiii., and chap. xii. occupied with the description of another, we are warranted in concluding that the main purpose of the chapter is to set before us a picture of this last.

Thus also we are led to understand the place of the chapter in the structure of the book. We have already seen that the seven Trumpets are occupied with judgments on the world. The seven Bowls, forming the next and highest series of judgments, are to be occupied with judgments on the degenerate members of the Church. It is a fitting thing, therefore, that we should be able to form a clear idea of the enemies by which these faithless disciples are subdued, and in resisting whom the steadfastness of the faithful remnant shall be proved. To describe them sooner was unnecessary. They are the friends, not the enemies, of the world. They are the enemies only of the Church. Hence the sudden transition made at the beginning of chap. xii. There is no chronological relation between it and the chapters which precede. The thoughts embodied in it refer only to what follows. The chapter is obviously divided into three parts, and the bearing of these parts upon one another will appear as we proceed.

And a great sign was seen in heaven; a woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: and she was with child; and she crieth out, travailing in birth, and in pain to be delivered. And there was seen another sign in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads seven diadems. And his tail draweth the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them into the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman that was about to

be delivered, that when she was delivered he might devour her child. And she was delivered of a son, a man-child, who as a shepherd shall tend all the nations with a sceptre of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and unto His throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that there they may nourish her a thousand two hundred and threescore days (xii. 1-6).

In the first chapter of the book of Genesis we read, "And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: He made the stars also."[1] Sun, and moon, and stars exhaust the Biblical notion of the heavenly bodies which give light upon the earth. They therefore, taken together, clothe this woman; and there is no need to search for any recondite meaning in the place which they severally occupy in her investiture. She is simply arrayed in light from head to foot. In other words, she is the perfect emblem of light in its brightness and purity. The use of the number *twelve* indeed suggests the thought of a bond of connexion between this light and the Christian Church. The tribes of Israel, the type of God's spiritual Israel, were in number twelve; our Lord chose to Himself twelve Apostles; the new Jerusalem has "twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel."[2]

But though the light is thus early connected with the thought of the Christian Church, and though the subsequent portion of the chapter confirms the connexion, the woman is not yet to be regarded as, in the strictest sense, representative of that community or Body historically viewed. By-and-by she will be so.

[1] Gen. i. 16. [2] Chap. xxi. 12.

In the meantime a comparison of ver. 6 with ver. 14, where her fleeing into the wilderness and her nourishment in it for precisely the same period of time as in ver. 6 are again mentioned, together with what we have already seen to be a peculiarity of St. John's mode of thought, forbids the supposition. The Apostle would not thus repeat himself. We are entitled therefore to infer that at the opening of the chapter he deals less with actual history than with the "pattern" of that history which had existed from all eternity in the mount. Hence also it would seem that the birth of the child, though undoubtedly referring to the birth of Jesus, is not the actual birth. It, too, is rather the eternal "pattern" of that event. Similar remarks apply to the *dragon*, who is not yet the historical Satan, and will only be so in the second paragraph, at ver. 9. The whole picture, in short, of these verses is one of the *ideal* which precedes the actual, and of which the actual is the counterpart and realization.

The resemblance, accordingly, borne by the first paragraph of this chapter (vers. 1-6) to the first paragraph of the fourth Gospel (vers. 1-5), is of the most striking kind. In neither is there any account of the actual birth of our Lord. In both (and we shall immediately see this still more fully brought out in the apocalyptic vision) we are introduced to Him at once, not as growing up to be the Light of the world, but as already grown up and as perfect light. In both we have the same light and the same darkness, and in both the same contrariety and struggle between the two. Nor does the comparison end here. We have also the same singular method of expressing the deliverance of the light from the enmity of the darkness. In John i. 5, correctly translated, we read 'The light

shineth in the darkness, and the darkness *overcame* it not," the thought being rather negative than positive, rather that of preservation than of victory. In the Apocalypse we read, *And her child was caught up unto God, and unto His throne*, the idea being again that of preservation rather than of victory.

Such is the general conception of the first paragraph of this chapter. The individual expressions need not detain us long. The woman's raiment of light has been already spoken of. Passing therefore from that, it need occasion no surprise that He who is Himself the Giver of light should be represented as the *Son* of light. God "is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."[1] Jesus, as the Son of God, is thus also the Son of light. No doubt the conception is continued even after we behold the woman in her actual, not her ideal, state. Jesus is still her Son.[2] Yet there is a true sense in which we may describe our Lord not only as the Foundation, but also as the Son, of the Church. He is "the First-born among many brethren,"[3] the elder Brother in a common Father's house. He is begotten by the power of the Holy Spirit[4]; and they that believe in His name are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."[5] So close indeed in the teaching of St. John is the identification of Christ and His people, that whatever is said of Him may be said of them, and what is said of them may be said of Him. Human thought and language fail to do justice to a relation so profound and mysterious. But it is everywhere the teaching of the beloved disciple—in

[1] 1 John i. 5.
[2] Comp. ver. 17.
[3] Rom. viii. 29.
[4] Matt. i. 20.
[5] John i. 13.

his Gospel, in his Epistles, in his Revelation—although the Church may not fully understand it until she has lived herself more into it than she has done. Her "life" will then bring her "light."[1]

The dragon of the passage is *great* and *red:* "great" because of the power which he possesses; "red," the colour of blood, because of the ferocity with which he destroys men: "He was a murderer from the beginning;" "Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother;" "And I saw the woman" (that is, the woman who rode upon the scarlet-coloured beast) "drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."[2] The dragon has further *seven heads*,—seven, the number of completeness, so that he possesses everything to enable him to execute his plans; and *ten horns*, the emblem at once of his strength and of his rule over all the kingdoms of the world. Upon the heads, too, are *seven diadems*, a word different from that which had been employed for the woman's "crown" in the first verse of the chapter. Hers is a crown of victory; the diadems of the dragon are only marks of royalty, and may be worn, as they will be worn, in defeat. The dragon's *tail*, again, like the tails of the locusts of the fifth Trumpet and of the horses of the sixth, is the instrument with which he destroys[3]; and *the third part of the stars of heaven* corresponds to "the third part" mentioned in each of the first four Trumpets. The figure of *casting the stars into the earth* is taken from the prophecy of Daniel, in which it is said of the "little horn" that "it waxed great, even to the host of heaven;

[1] Comp. John i. 4.
[2] John viii. 44; 1 John iii. 12; Rev. xvii. 6.
[3] Chap. ix. 10, 19.

and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them."[1]

The dragon next takes up his position *before the woman which was about to be delivered, that when she was delivered he might devour her child;* and the first historical circumstances to which the idea corresponds, and in which it is realized, may be found in the effort of Pharaoh to destroy the infant Moses. Pharaoh is indeed often compared in the Old Testament to a dragon: "Thou didst divide the sea by Thy strength: Thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters;" "Speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself."[2] The power, and craft, and cruelty of the Egyptian king could hardly have been absent from the Seer's mind when he employed the figure of the text. But he was certainly not thinking of Pharaoh alone. He remembered also the plot of Herod to destroy the Child Jesus.[3] Pharaoh and Herod—men quailed before them; yet both were no more than instruments in the hands of God. Both worked out His "determinate counsel and foreknowledge."[4]

The child is born, and is described in language worthy of our notice. He is *a son, a man-child;* and the at first sight tautological information appears to hint at more than the mere sex of the child. He is already more than a child: he is a man. There is a similar emphasis in the words of our Lord when He said to His disciples in His last consolatory discourse, "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow,

[1] Dan. viii. 10.
[2] Ps. lxxiv. 13; Ezek. xxix. 3.
[3] Matt. ii. 16.
[4] Acts ii. 23.

because her hour is come: but when she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for the joy that *a man* is born into the world."[1] From the first the child is less a child than a man, strong, muscular, and vigorous, who *as a shepherd shall tend all the nations with a sceptre of iron.* Strange that we should be invited to dwell on this ideal aspect of the Son's work rather than any other! No doubt the words are quoted from the second Psalm. This, however, only removes the difficulty a step further back. Why either there or here should the shepherd work of the Messiah be connected with an iron sceptre rather than a peaceful crook? The explanation is not difficult. Both the Psalm and the Apocalypse are occupied mainly with the victory of Christ over His adversaries. His friends have already been secured in the possession of a complete salvation. It remains only that His foes shall be finally put down. Hence the "sceptre of iron." Strange also, it may be thought, that in this ideal picture we should find no "pattern" of the life of our Lord on earth, of His labours, or sufferings, or death; and that we should only be invited to behold Him in His incarnation and ascension into heaven! But again the explanation is not difficult. Over against Satan stands, not a humbled merely, but a risen and glorified, Redeemer. The process by which He conquered it is unnecessary to dwell upon. Enough that we know the fact.

The woman's child being thus safe, *the woman* herself *fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God,* and where she shall be nourished by heavenly sustenance. Thus Israel wandered forty years, fed with the manna that fell from heaven and the water that flowed from the smitten rock.[2] Thus Elijah fled

[1] John xvi. 21. [2] 1 Cor. x. 3, 4.

to the brook Cherith, and afterwards to the wilderness, where his wants were supplied in the one case by the ravens, in the other by an angel.[1] And thus was our Lord upheld for forty days by the words that proceeded out of the mouth of God.[2] This wilderness life of the Church, too, continues during the whole Christian era, during the whole period of witnessing.[3] Always in the wilderness so long as her Lord is personally absent, she eats heavenly food and drinks living water.

Such is the first scene of this chapter; and, glancing once more over it, it would seem as if its chief purpose were to present to us the two great opposing forces of light and darkness, of the Son and the dragon, considered in themselves.

The second scene follows:—

And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels: and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the devil, and Satan, the deceiver of the whole inhabited earth: he was cast down into the earth, and his angels were cast down with him. And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accuseth them before our God day and night And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and ye that tabernacle in them. Woe for the earth and for the sea! because the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short season (xii. 7-12).

If our conception of the first six verses of the chapter be correct, it will be evident that the idea often entertained, that the verses following them form a break

[1] 1 Kings xvii. 6; xix. 5. [2] Matt. iv 4. [3] Chap. xi. 3.

in the narrative which is only resumed at ver. 13, is wrong. There is no break. The progress of the thought is continuous. The combatants have been set before us, and we have now the contest in which they are engaged. This consideration also helps us to understand the personality of Michael and the particular conflict in the Seer's view.

For, as to the first of these two points, it is even in itself probable that the Leader of the hosts of light will be no other than the Captain of our salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The dragon leads the hosts of darkness. The Son has been described as the opponent against whom the enmity of the dragon is especially directed. When the war begins, we have every reason to expect that as the one leader takes the command, so also will the other. There is much to confirm this conclusion. The name Michael leads to it, for that word signifies, "Who is like God?" and such a name is at least more appropriate to a Divine than to a created being. In the New Testament, too, we read of "Michael the archangel"[1]—there seems to be only one, for we never read of archangels[2]—and an archangel is again spoken of in circumstances that can hardly be associated with the thought of any one but God: "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God."[3] Above all, the prophecies of Daniel, in which the name Michael first occurs, may be said to decide the point. A person named Michael there appears on different occasions as the defender of the Church against her enemies,[4] and once at least in a connexion leading directly to the thought

[1] Jude 9.
[2] Brown, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 69.
[3] 1 Thess. iv. 16.
[4] Dan. x. 13, 21.

of our Lord Himself: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of Thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time Thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."[1] These considerations justify the conclusion that the Michael now spoken of is the representative of Christ; and we have already seen, in examining the vision of the "strong angel" in chap. x., that such a mode of speaking is in perfect harmony with the general method of St. John.

Light is thus thrown also upon the second point above mentioned: the particular conflict referred to in these verses. The statement that *there was war in heaven*, and that when the dragon was defeated he was *cast down into the earth*, might lead us to think of an earlier conflict between good and evil than any in which man has part: of that mentioned by St. Peter and St. Jude, when the former consoles the righteous by the thought that "God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment,"[2] and when the latter warns sinners to remember that "angels which kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, He hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."[3] The circumstances, however, of the war,

[1] Dan. xii. 1-3. [2] 2 Pet. ii. 4. [3] Jude 6.

lead rather to the thought of a conflict in which the Son, incarnate and glorified, takes His part. For *this* "Son" is the opponent of the dragon introduced to us in the first paragraph of the chapter. "Heaven" is not so much a premundane or supramundane locality as the spiritual sphere within which believers dwell even during their earthly pilgrimage, when that pilgrimage is viewed upon its higher side. And the means by which the victory is gained—for the victors *overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony*—distinctly indicate that the struggle referred to took place after the work of redemption had been completed, not before it was begun.

Several other passages of the New Testament are in harmony with this supposition. Thus it was that when the seventy returned to our Lord with joy after their mission, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject unto us in Thy name," He, beholding in this the pledge of His completed victory, exclaimed, "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven."[1] Thus it was that when charged with casting out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of the demons, our Lord pointed out to His accusers that His actions proved Him to be the Conqueror, and that the kingdom of God was come unto them: "When the strong man fully armed guardeth his own court, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him his whole armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils."[2] To the same effect are all those passages where our Lord or His Apostles speak, not of a partial, but of a complete, victory over Satan, so that for His people the great

[1] Luke x. 17, 18. [2] Luke xi. 21, 22.

enemy of man is already judged, and overthrown, and bruised beneath their feet: "Now is a judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out;" "And when He" (the Advocate) "is come, He will convince the world of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged;" "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death He might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage;" "Whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith;" "We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not; but He that was begotten of God keepeth him, and the evil one toucheth him not."[1]

In passages such as these we have the same thought as that before us in this vision. Satan has been cast out of heaven; that is, *in his warfare against the children of God he has been completely overthrown.* Over their higher life, their life in a risen and glorified Redeemer, he has no power. They are for ever escaped from his bondage, and are free. But he has been *cast down into the earth, and his angels with him;* that is, over the *men of the world* he still exerts his power, and they are led captive by him at his will. Hence, accordingly, the words of the *great voice* heard in heaven which occupy all the latter part of the vision, words which distinctly bring out the difference between the two aspects of Satan now adverted to,—(1) his impotence as regards the disciples of Jesus who are faithful unto

[1] John xii. 31; xvi. 11; Heb. ii. 14, 15; 1 John v. 4, 18.

death: *Rejoice, O heavens, and ye that dwell in them;* (2) his mastery over the ungodly: *Woe for the earth and for the sea! for the devil is gone down unto you in great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short season.* Although therefore, the fall of the angels from their first estate may be remotely hinted at, the vision refers to the spiritual contest begun after the resurrection of Jesus; and we ask our readers only to pay particular regard to the double relation of Satan to mankind which is referred to in it: his subjection to the righteous and the subjection of the wicked to him. One phrase only may seem inconsistent with this view. In ver. 9 Satan is described as *the deceiver of the whole inhabited earth,* for that, and not "the whole world," is the true rendering of the original.[1] "The whole inhabited earth" cannot be the same as "the earth." The latter is simply the wicked; the former includes all men. But the words describe a characteristic of Satan in himself, and not what he actually effects. He *is* the deceiver of the whole inhabited earth. He lays his snares for all. He tempted Jesus Himself in the wilderness, and many a time thereafter during His labours and His sufferings. The vision gives no ground for the supposition that God's children are not *attacked* by him. It assures us only that when the attack is made it is at the same instant foiled. There is a battle, but Christians advance to it as conquerors; before it begins victory is theirs.[2]

One other expression of these verses may be noted: the *short season* spoken of in ver. 12. This period of time is not to be looked at as if it were a brief special season at the close of the Christian age, when

[1] Comp. R.V. (margin). [2] Comp. 1 John v. 4.

the wrath of Satan is aroused to a greater than ordinary degree because the last hour is about to strike. The *great wrath* with which he goes forth is that stirred in him by his defeat through the death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord. It was roused in him when he was "cast into the earth," and from that moment of defeat therefore the "short season" begins.

The third paragraph of the chapter follows :—

And when the dragon saw that he was cast down into the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man-child. And there were given to the woman the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, unto her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman water as a river, that he might cause her to be carried away by the stream. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon waxed wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus; and he stood upon the sand of the sea (xii. 13-xiii. 1*a*).

We have already seen that the woman introduced to us in the first paragraph of this chapter is the embodiment and the bearer of light. She is there indeed set before us in her ideal aspect, in what she is in herself, rather than in her historical position. Now we meet her in actual history, or, in other words, she is the historical Church of God in the New Testament phase of her development. As such she has a mission to the world. She is "the sent" of Christ, as Christ was "the sent" of the Father.[1] In witnessing for Christ, she has to reveal to the children of men what Divine love is. But she has to do this in the

[1] John xx. 21.

midst of trouble. This world is not her rest; and she must bear the Saviour's cross if she would afterwards wear His crown.

Persecuted, however, she is not forsaken. She had given her *the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, unto her place*—the place prepared of God for her protection. There can be little doubt as to the allusion. The "great eagle" is that of which God Himself spoke to Moses in the mount: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself;"[1] and that alluded to by Moses in the last song taught by him to the people: "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him."[2] The same eagle was probably in view of David when he sang, "How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings;"[3] while it was also that on the wings of which the members of the Church draw continually nearer God: "They mount up with wings as eagles."[4] To the woman then there was given a "refuge from the storm," a "covert from the heat," of trial, that she might abide in it, nourished with her heavenly food, *for a time, and times, and half a time.* Of this period we have already spoken. It is the same as that of the three and a half years, the "forty-two months," the "thousand two hundred and threescore days." It is thus the whole period of the Church's militant

[1] Exod. xix. 3, 4.
[2] Deut. xxxii. 11, 12.
[3] Ps. xxxvi. 7.
[4] Isa. xl. 31.

history upon earth. During all of it she is persecuted by Satan; during all of it she is preserved and nourished by the care of God. At first sight indeed it may seem as if this shelter in the wilderness were incompatible with the task of witnessing assigned to her. But it is one of the paradoxes of the position of the children of God in this present world that while they are above it they are yet in it; that while they are seated "in the heavenly places" they are exposed to the storms of earth; that while their life is hid with Christ in God they witness and war before the eyes of men. The persecution and the nourishment, the suffering and the glory, run parallel with each other. One other remark may be made. There is obviously an emphasis upon the word "two" prefixed to "wings." Though founded upon the fact that the wings of the bird are two in number, a deeper meaning would seem to be intended; and that meaning is suggested by the fact that the witnesses of chap. xi. were also two. The protection extended corresponds exactly to the need for it. The "grace" of God is in all circumstances "sufficient" for His people.[1] No temptation can assail them which He will not enable them to endure, or out of which He will not provide for them a way of escape.[2] Therefore may they always take up the language of the Apostle and say, "Most gladly will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the strength of Christ may spread a tabernacle over me. Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."[3]

The woman fled into the wilderness, but she was

[1] 2 Cor. xii. 9. [2] 1 Cor. x. 13. [3] 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

not permitted to flee thither without a final effort of Satan to overwhelm her; and in the manner in which this effort is made we again recognise the language of the Old Testament. There the assaults of the ungodly upon Israel are frequently compared to those floods of waters which, owing to the sudden risings of the streams, are in the East so common and so disastrous. Isaiah describes the enemy as coming in "like a flood."[1] Of the floods of the Euphrates and the destruction which they symbolized we have already spoken[2]; and in hours of deliverance from trouble the Church has found the song of triumph most suitable to her condition in the words of the Psalmist, 'If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: then the proud waters had gone over our soul. Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth."[3] The main reference is, however, in all probability to the passage of Israel across the Red Sea, for then, says David, calling to mind that great deliverance in the history of his people, and finding in it the type of deliverances so often experienced by himself, "the sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. . . . In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God. . . . He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters."[4]

The most remarkable point to be noticed here is, however, not the deliverance itself, but the method by which it is accomplished. To understand this, as well

[1] Isa. lix. 19.
[2] Comp. p. 150.
[3] Ps. cxxiv. 2-6.
[4] Ps. xviii. 4-16.

as the wrath of Satan immediately afterwards described, it is necessary to bear in mind that twofold element in the Church the existence of which is the key to so many of the most intricate problems of the Apocalypse. The Church embraces both true and false members within her pale. She is the "vine" of our Lord's last discourse to His disciples, some of the branches of which bear much fruit, while others are only fit to be cast into the fire and burned.[1] The thought of these latter members is in the mind of St. John when he tells us, in a manner so totally unexpected, that *the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth.* He is thinking of the nominal members of the Church, of the merely nominal Christianity which she has so often exhibited to the world. That Christianity the world loves. When the Church's tone and life are lowered by her yielding to the influence of the things of time, then the world, "the earth," is ready to hasten to her side. It offers her its friendship, courts alliance with her, praises her for the good order which she introduces, by arguments drawn from eternity, into the things of time, and swallows up the river which the dragon casts out of his mouth against her. When Christ's disciples are of the world, the world loves its own.[2] They are helping "the earth" to do its work. Why should the earth not recognise and welcome the assistance given it by foolish foes as well as friends? Therefore it helps the woman.

But side by side with this aspect of the Church which met the approbation of "the earth," the dragon saw that she had another aspect of determined hostility

[1] John xv. 5, 6. [2] John xv. 19.

to his claims; and he *waxed wroth* with her. She had within her not only degenerate but true members, not only worldly professors, but those who were one with her Divine and glorified Lord. These were *the rest of her seed, which keep the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus.* They were the "few names in Sardis which did not defile their garments,"[1] "the remnant according to the election of grace,"[2] "the seed which the Lord hath blessed."[3] Such disciples of Jesus the dragon could not tolerate, and he *went away to make war* with them. Thus is the painful distinction still kept up which marks all the later part of the Apocalypse. The spectacle was one over which St. John had mourned as he beheld it in the Church of his own day: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that not all are of us. Little children, it is the last hour."[4] It was a spectacle which he knew would be repeated so long as the Church of Christ was in contact with the world; and he notes it now.

One other point ought to be noticed in connexion with these verses. The helping of the woman by the earth seems to be the Scripture parallel to the difficult words of St. Paul when he says in writing to the Thessalonians, "And now ye know that which restraineth to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way."[5] This "restraining" power, generally, and in all probability correctly, under-

[1] Chap. iii. 4. [2] Isa. lxi. 9.
[3] Rom. xi. 5. [4] 1 John ii. 18, 19.
[5] 2 Thess. ii. 6, 7.

stood of the Roman State, is "the earth" of St. John helping the woman because it is helped by her.

We have been introduced to the first great enemy of the Church of Christ. It remains only that he shall take up his position on the field. The next clause therefore which meets us, and which ought to be read, not as the first clause of chap. xiii., but as the last of chap. xii., and in which the third person ought to be substituted for the first, describes him as doing so: *And he stood upon the sand of the sea*, upon the shore between the earth and the sea, where he could so command them both as to justify the "Woe" already uttered over both in the twelfth verse of the chapter. There we leave him for a time, only remarking that we are not to think of ocean lying before us in a calm, but of the restless and troubled sea, raised into huge waves by the storm-winds contending upon it for the mastery and dashing its waves upon the beach.

CHAPTER X.

THE SECOND AND THIRD GREAT ENEMIES OF THE CHURCH.

REV. xiii.

WE have seen that the main purpose of chap. xii. was to introduce to our notice the dragon, or Satan, the first great enemy of the Church. The object of chap. xiii. is to make us acquainted with her second and third great enemies, and thus to enable us to form a distinct conception of the powerful foes with which the followers of Christ have to contend. The two enemies referred to are respectively styled "a beast" (ver. 1) and "another beast" (ver. 11), or, as they are generally termed, the first beast and the second beast. To the word "beast" must be assigned in both cases its fullest and most pregnant sense. The two "beasts" are not only beasts, but wild beasts, strong, fierce, rapacious, and cruel, even the apparent softness and tenderness of the second being associated with those dragon words which can proceed only from a dragon heart.[1]

The first is thus described:—

And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a

[1] Ver. 11.

leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as though it had been slaughtered unto death; and the stroke of his death was healed: and the whole earth marvelled after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon because he gave his authority unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast, and who is able to war with him? And there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and there was given to him authority to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth for blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, even them that tabernacle in the heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and there was given to him authority over every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation. And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, every one whose name hath not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slaughtered. If any one hath an ear, let him hear. If any one leadeth into captivity, into captivity he goeth: if any one shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints (xiii. 1*b*-10).

The description carries us back to the prophecies of Daniel, and the language of the prophet helps us to understand that of the Seer. It is thus that the former speaks: "Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven brake forth upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made to stand upon two feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it. And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in his mouth between his teeth: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the

beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, terrible and powerful, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things."[1] These particulars embody the prophet's picture of the world-power in four successive phases of its manifestation, until it culminates in the "little horn;" and it is not possible to doubt that the Seer, while modifying them with characteristic freedom, finds in them the foundation of his figure.

In both cases there is the same origin,—the sea swept by strong winds from every point of the compass, until the opposing forces rush upon one another, mingle in wild confusion, send up their spray into the air, and then, dark with the reflection of the clouds above and turbid with sand, exhaust themselves with one long, sullen roar upon the beach. In both cases the same animals are referred to, though in the vision of Daniel they are separated, in that of St. John combined: the leopard, with his sudden, cruel spring; the bear, with his slow, relentless brutishness; and the lion, with his all-conquering power. Finally, in the case of both mention is made also of "ten horns," which are distinct from the lineal succession of the

[1] Dan. vii. 2-8.

heads. So far, therefore, we can have little hesitation in affirming the conclusion arrived at by most commentators that in this *beast coming up out of the sea* we have an emblem of that power of the world which, under the guidance of "the prince of the world," opposes and persecutes the Church of Christ. Several particulars regarding it, however, still demand our notice.

1. The horns are not to be thought of as distributed among the heads, but rather as a group by themselves, constituting along with the seventh head a manifestation of the beast distinct from that expressed by each of the separate heads. In a certain sense the seventh head, with its ten horns, is thus one of the seven, for in them the beast expresses himself. In another sense it is like the "fourth beast" of the prophet Daniel: "diverse from all the beasts that were before it" and even more terrible than they.

2. The seven heads seem most fittingly to represent seven powers of the world by which the children of God had been persecuted in the past or were to be persecuted in the future. The supposition has indeed been often made that they represent seven forms of Roman government or seven emperors who successively occupied the imperial throne. But neither of these sevens can be definitely fixed by the advocates of the general thought; while the whole strain of the passage suggests that the beast which, in the form now dealt with, unquestionably represents a world-power conterminous with the whole earth, grows up into this form only in his seventh head and ten horns manifestation. The other heads are rather preparatory to the last than to be ranked equally along with it. Making a natural beginning, therefore, with the oldest persecuting power mentioned in that Bible history of which the

Apocalyptist makes such extensive use, and following the line down to the Seer's time, the seven heads appear to represent the Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman powers, together with that power, wider even than the Roman, which St. John saw was about to rage in the hurried days of "the last time" against the simplicity, purity, holiness, and unworldliness of Christ's little flock. Each of these powers is a "head." The last is the concentrated essence, the most universal, the most penetrating, influence of them all. Taken together, they supply, as no other interpretation does, what is absolutely essential to a correct understanding of the figure,—the idea of completeness.

3. By such a rendering also we gain a natural interpretation of the head beheld *as though it had been slaughtered unto death; and the stroke of his death was healed.* Other renderings fail to afford this, for no successive forms of government at Rome and no successive emperors furnish a member of their series of which it may be said that it is first slain and then brought back to a life of greater energy and more quickened action. Yet without the thought of death and resurrection it is impossible to fulfil the conditions of the problem. The head spoken of in ver. 3 had not been merely *wounded* or *smitten:* it had been "*slaughtered* unto death;" and it was not merely his "deadly wound,"[1] or even "his death-stroke:"[2] it was the "stroke of his death" that had been healed. There had been actual death and resurrection from death, the contrast and travesty of that death and resurrection which had befallen the Lamb slaughtered and raised again.[3] Such

[1] Chap. xiii. 3, A.V. [2] Chap. xiii. 3, R.V. [3] Chap. v. 6.

a death and resurrection can only be fittingly applied to that system of worldly influence, or, in other words, to that "prince of the world," whose power over His people Jesus was not simply to modify, but to extinguish. The Redeemer of the world came, not to wound or weaken only, but to "bring to nought," him that had the power of death—that is, the devil—and to give perfect and eternal freedom to all who would allow the chains in which Satan had bound them to be broken.[1] But the death, if we may so speak, of Satan in relation to them was accompanied by his resurrection in relation to the world, over which the great enemy of souls was thenceforward to exercise a more irresistible sway than ever. The time is that already spoken of in the previous chapter, when the devil went down into the earth, "having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short season."[2] Nor is there any difficulty in determining to which of the seven heads of the beast the death and resurrection spoken of apply, for a comparison of chap. xvii. 8-11 with the present passage shows that it is to the sixth, or Roman, head that St. John intends his language to refer.

4. Particular attention must be paid to the fact that it is upon the beast in his *resurrection state* that we are to dwell, for the whole earth marvels after the beast not previously, but subsequently, to the point of time at which the stroke of his death is healed.[3] In that condition, too, he is not thought of as raging only in the Roman empire. His influence is universal. Wherever men are he is: *And there was given to him authority over every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation.*[4] The fourfold division indicates absolute universality; and

[1] Heb. ii. 14.
[2] Chap. xii. 12.
[3] Vers. 3, 4.
[4] Ver. 7.

the *whole earth*—that is, all ungodly ones—worships the beast, even every one whose name has not been written in the Lamb's book of life.[1] Thus raging with an extent of power never possessed by any form of Roman government or any emperor of Rome, he rages also throughout all time, from the first to the second coming of the Lord, for he has *authority given to him to continue forty and two months*,[2] the period so denoted embracing the whole Christian era from its beginning to its close.[3]

5. Three points more may be noticed before drawing the general conclusion to which all this leads. In the first place, the beast is the vicegerent of another power which acts through him and by means of him. *The dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority.* The dragon himself does not directly act. He has his representative, or vicar, or substitute, in the beast. In the second place, the worship paid by "the whole earth" to the beast, when it cries, *Who is like unto the beast? and who is able to make war with him?* is an obvious imitation of the ascriptions of praise to God contained in not a few passages of the Old Testament: "Who is like unto the Lord our God, that hath His seat on high?"; "To whom then will ye liken Me, that I should be equal to him? saith the Holy One;" "Hearken unto Me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel. . . . To whom will ye liken Me, and make Me equal, and compare Me, that we may be like?"[4] In the third place, the beast opens his mouth, not only to blaspheme against God, but *against His tabernacle, even them that tabernacle in*

[1] Ver. 8.
[2] Ver. 5.
[3] Comp p. 175.
[4] Ps. cxiii. 5; Isa. xl. 25, xlvi. 3, 5.

the heaven,[1] expressions in which the use of the word 'tabernacle" leads directly to the thought of opposition to Him who became flesh and tabernacled among us, and who now spreads His tabernacle over His saints.[2]

The whole description of the beast is thus, in multiplied particulars, a travesty of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the Head and King, the Guardian and Protector, of His people. Like the latter, the former is the representative, the "sent," of an unseen power, by whom all authority is "given" him; he has his death and his resurrection from the dead; he has his throngs of marvelling and enthusiastic worshippers; his authority over those who own his sway is limited by no national boundaries, but is conterminous with the whole world; he gathers up and unites in himself all the scattered elements of darkness and enmity to the truth which had previously existed among men, and from which the Church of God had suffered.

What then can this first beast be? Not Rome, either pagan or papal; not any single form of earthly government, however strong; not any Roman emperor, however vicious or cruel; but the general influence of the world, in so far as it is opposed to God, substituting the human for the Divine, the seen for the unseen, the temporal for the eternal. He is the impersonation of that world of which St. Paul writes, "We received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God,"[3] of which St. James speaks when he says, "Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God,"[4] and in regard to which St. John exhorts, "Love not the world, neither

[1] Ver. 6.
[2] John i. 14; Rev. vii. 15.
[3] 1 Cor. ii. 12. Comp. Gal. vi. 14.
[4] James iv. 4.

the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vain-glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."[1] This beast, in short, is the world viewed in that aspect in which our Lord Himself could say of it that the devil was its prince, which He told His disciples He had overcome, and in regard to which He prayed in His high-priestly prayer, "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them out of the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."[2]

The influence of the beast here spoken of is therefore confined to no party, or sect, or age. It may be found in the Church and in the State, in every society, in every family, or even in every heart, for wherever man is ruled by the seen instead of the unseen or by the material instead of the spiritual, there "the world" is. "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."[3]

Against this foe the true life of the saints will be preserved. Nothing can harm the life that is hid with Christ in God. But the saints may nevertheless be troubled, and persecuted, and killed, as were the witnesses of chap. xi., by the beast that *had given unto him to make war with them, and to overcome them.* Such is the thought that leads to the last words of the paragraph with which we are now dealing: *If any one*

[1] 1 John ii. 15, 16.
[2] John xiv. 30; xvi. 33; xvii. 15, 16.
[3] Eph. vi. 12.

leadeth into captivity, into captivity he goeth; if any one shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed. In the great law of God, the *lex talionis*, consolation is given to the persecuted. Their enemies would lead them into captivity, but a worse captivity awaits themselves. They would kill with the sword, but with a sharper sword than that of human power they shall themselves be killed. Is there not enough in that to inspire the saints with patience and faith? Well may they endure with unfainting hearts when they remember who is upon their side, for "it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict them," and to them that are afflicted "rest"[1]—rest with Apostles, prophets, martyrs, the whole Church of God, rest never again to be disturbed either by sin or sorrow. *Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.*

The second enemy of the Church, or the first beast, has been described. St. John now proceeds to the third enemy, or the second beast:—

And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like unto a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the authority of the first beast in his sight; and he maketh the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, the stroke of whose death was healed. And he doeth great signs, that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men. And he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, who hath the stroke of the sword, and lived. And it was given unto him to give breath to it, even to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as should not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond, that

[1] 2 Thess. i. 6, 7.

there be given them a mark on their right hand, or upon their forehead: and that no man should be able to buy or to sell, save he that hath the mark, even the name of the beast or the number of his name (xiii. 11-17).

The first beast came up out of "the sea" (ver. 1); the second beast comes up out of *the earth:* and the contrast, so strongly marked, between these two sources, makes it necessary to draw a clear and definite line of distinction between the origin of the one beast and that of the other. The "sea," however, both in the Old Testament and in the New, is the symbol of the mass of the Gentile nations, of the heathen world in its condition of alienation from God and true religious life. In contrast with this, the "earth," as here used, must be the symbol of the Jews, among whom, to whatever extent they had abused their privileges, the Almighty had revealed Himself in a special manner, showing "His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel."[1] The Jews were an agricultural, not a commercial, people; and upon that great highway along which the commerce of the nations poured they looked with suspicion and dislike. Hence the sea, in its restlessness and barrenness, became to them the emblem of an irreligious world; the land, in its quiet and fruitfulness, the emblem of religion with all its blessings. In this sense the contrast here must be understood; and the statement as to the different origin of the first and second beasts is of itself sufficient to determine that, while the former belongs to a secular, the latter belongs to a religious, sphere. Many other particulars mentioned in connexion with the second beast confirm this conclusion.

[1] Ps. cxlvii. 19.

1. The *two horns like unto a lamb* are unquestionably a travesty of the "seven horns" of the Lamb, so often spoken of in these visions; and the description carries us to the thought of Antichrist, of one who sets himself up as the true Christ, of one who, professing to imitate the Redeemer, is yet His opposite.

2. The words *And he spoke as a dragon* remind us of the description given by our Lord of those false teachers who "come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves,"[1] as well as of the language of St. Paul when he warns the Ephesian elders that after his departing "grievous wolves shall enter in among them, not sparing the flock."[2]

3. The function to which this beast devotes himself is religious, not secular. *He maketh the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast;* and, having persuaded them to make an image to that beast, *it was given unto him to give breath to it, even to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as should not worship the image of the beast should be killed.*[3]

4. The great signs and wonders done by this beast, such as making *fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men*, are a reminiscence of the prophet Elijah at Carmel; while the *signs* by which he successfully deceives the world take us again to the words of Jesus: "There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect."[4] St. Paul's words also, when he speaks of the man of sin, make similar mention of his "signs:"

[1] Matt. vii. 15.
[2] Acts xx. 29.
[3] Vers. 12, 15.
[4] Matt xxiv. 24.

"Whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all pôwer and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that are perishing; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."[1]

5. Finally, the fact that this beast bears the name of "the false prophet,"[2] the very term used by St. John when speaking of the false teachers who had arisen in his day,[3] may surely be accepted as conclusive that we have here a symbol of the antichrists of the first Epistle of that Apostle. Of the antichrists, let it be observed, not of Antichrist as a single individual manifestation. For there is a characteristic of this beast which leads to the impression that more than one agent is included under the terms of the symbol. The beast has *two horns*. Why two? We may be sure that the circumstance is not without a meaning, and that it is not determined only by the fact that the animal referred to has in its natural condition the rudiments of no more than two. In other visions of the Apocalypse we read of a lamb with "seven horns," and of a head of the beast with "ten horns," the numbers in both cases being symbolical. The "two horns" now spoken of must also be symbolical; and thus viewed, the expression leads us to the thought of the two witnesses, of the two prophets of truth, spoken of in chap. xi. But these two witnesses represent all faithful witnesses for Christ; and, in like manner, the two horns represent the many perverters of the Christian faith beheld by the Seer springing up around him, who,

[1] 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10.
[2] Comp. chaps. xvi. 13; xix. 20; xx. 10.
[3] 1 John iv. 1.

professing to be Apostles of the Lamb, endeavoured to overthrow His Gospel.

These considerations lead to a natural and simple interpretation of what is meant by the second beast. The plausible interpretation suggested by many of the ablest commentators on this book, that by the second beast is meant "worldly wisdom, comprehending everything in learning, science and art which human nature of itself, in its civilized state, can attain to, the worldly power in its more refined and spiritual elements, its prophetical or priestly class,"[1] must be unhesitatingly dismissed. It fails to apprehend the very essence of the symbol. It speaks of a secular and mundane influence, when the whole point of St. John's words lies in this,—that the influence of which he speaks is religious. Not in anything springing out of the world in its ordinary sense, but in something springing out of the Church and the Church's faith, is the meaning of the Apostle to be sought.

Was there anything then in St. John's own day that might have suggested the figure thus employed? Had he ever witnessed any spectacle that might have burned such thoughts into his soul? Let us turn to his Gospel and learn from it to look upon the world as it was when it met his eyes. What had he seen, and seen with an indignation that penetrates to the core his narrative of his Master's life? He had seen the Divine institution of Judaism, designed by the God of Israel to prepare the way for the Light and the Life of men, perverted by its appointed guardians, and made an instrument for blinding instead of enlightening the soul. He had seen the Eternal Son, in all the glory of

[1] Fairbairn, *On Prophecy*, p. 328.

His "grace" and "truth," coming to the things that were His own, and yet the men that were His own rejecting Him, under the influence of their selfish religious guides. He had seen the Temple, which ought to have been filled with the prayers of a spiritual worship, profaned by worldly traffic and the love of gain. Nay more, he remembered one scene so terrible that it could never be forgotten by him, when in the judgment-hall of Pilate even that unscrupulous representative of Roman power had again and again endeavoured to set Jesus free, and when the Jews had only succeeded in accomplishing their plan by the argument, "If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend."[1] They Cæsar's friends! They attach value to honours bestowed by Cæsar! O vile hypocrisy! O dark extremity of hate! Judaism at the feet of Cæsar! So powerfully had the thought of these things taken possession of the mind of the beloved disciple, so deeply was he moved by the narrowness and bigotry and fanaticism which had usurped the place of generosity and tenderness and love, that, in order to find utterance for his feelings, he had been compelled to put a new meaning into an old word, and to concentrate into the term "the Jews" everything most opposed to Christ and Christianity.

Nor was it only in Judaism that St. John had seen the spirit of religion so overmastered by the spirit of the world that it became the world's slave. He had witnessed the same thing in Heathenism. It is by no means improbable that when he speaks of *the image of the beast* he may also think of those images of Cæsar the worshipping of which was everywhere made the

[1] John xix. 12.

test of devotion to the Roman State and of abjuration of the Christian faith. There again the forms and sanctions of religion had been used to strengthen the dominion of secular power and worldly force. Both Judaism and Heathenism, in short, supplied the thoughts which, translated into the language of symbolism, are expressed in the conception of the second beast and its relation to the first.

Yet we are not to imagine that, though St. John started from these things, his vision was confined to them. He thinks not of Jew or heathen only at a particular era, but of man; not of human nature only as it appears amidst the special circumstances of his own day, but as it appears everywhere and throughout all time. He is not satisfied with dwelling upon existing phenomena alone. He penetrates to the principles from which they spring. And wherever he sees a spirit professing to uphold religion, but objecting to all the unpalatable truths with which it is connected in the Christian faith, wherever he sees the gate to future glory made wide instead of narrow and the way broad instead of straitened, there he beholds the dire combination of the first and second beasts presented in this chapter. The light has become darkness, and how great is the darkness![1] The salt has lost its savour, and is fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill.[2]

In speaking of the subserviency of the second to the first beast, the Seer had spoken of *a mark given* to all the followers of the latter *on their right hand, or upon their forehead*, and without which no one was to be admitted to the privileges of their association or of buying or selling in their city. He had further

[1] Matt. vi. 23. [2] Luke xiv. 34, 35.

described this mark as being either *the name of the beast or the number of his name.* To explain more fully the nature of this "mark" appears to be the aim of the last verse of the chapter :—

> Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty and six (xiii. 18).

To discuss with anything like fulness the difficult questions connected with these words would require a volume rather than the few sentences at the close of a chapter that can be here devoted to it. Referring, therefore, his readers to what he has elsewhere written on this subject,[1] the writer can only make one or two brief remarks, in order to point out the path in which the solution of the problems suggested by the words must be sought.

It is indeed remarkable that the Seer should speak at all of "the number" of the name of the beast; that is, of the number which would be gained by adding together the numbers represented by the several letters of the name. Why not be content with the name itself? Throughout this book the followers of Christ are never spoken of as stamped with a number, but either with the name of the Father or the Son, or with a new name which no one "knoweth" saving he that receiveth it.[2] Now the principle of Antithesis or Contrast, which so largely rules the structure of the Apocalypse, might lead us to expect a similar procedure in the case of the followers of the beast. Why then is it not resorted to?

[1] *The Revelation of St. John: Baird Lectures published by Macmillan and Co.*, second edition, p. 142, etc., 319, etc.

[2] Comp. chaps. iii. 12; xiv. 1; ii. 17.

1. St. John may not himself have known the name. He may have been acquainted only with the character of the beast, and with the fact, too often overlooked by inquirers, that to that character its name, when made known, must correspond. It is not any name, any designation, by which the beast may be individualized, that will fulfil the conditions of his thought. No reader of St. John's writings can have failed to notice that to him the word "name" is far more than a mere appellative. It expresses the inner nature of the person to whom it is applied. The "name" of the Father expresses the character of the Father, that of the Son the character of the Son. The Seer, therefore, might be satisfied in the present instance with his conviction that the name of the beast, whatever it be, must be a name which will express the inner nature of the beast; and he may have asked no more. Not only so. When we enter into the style of the Apostle's thought, we may even inquire whether it was possible for a Christian to know the *name* of the beast in the sense which the word "name" demands. No man could know the new name written upon the white stone given to him that overcometh "but he that receiveth it."[1] In other words, no one but a Christian indeed could have that Christian experience which would enable him to understand the "new name." In like manner now, St. John may have felt that it was not possible for the followers of Christ to know the *name* of Antichrist. Antichristian experience alone could teach the name of Antichrist, service of the beast the name of the beast; and such experience no Christian could have. But this need not hinder him from giving the number.

[1] Chap. ii. 17. Comp. John i. 31; iv. 32.

The "number" spoke only of general character and fate; and knowledge of it did not imply, like knowledge of the "name," communion of spirit with him to whom the name belonged.

2. From this it follows that not the "name," but the 'number" of the name, is of importance in the Apostle's view. The name no doubt must have a meaning which, taken even by itself, would be portentous; but, according to the artificial system of thought here followed, the "number" is the real portent, the real bearer of the Divine message of wrath and doom.

3. This is precisely the lesson borne by the number 666. The number six itself awakened a feeling of dread in the breast of the Jew who felt the significance of numbers. It fell below the sacred number seven just as much as eight went beyond it. This last number denoted more than the simple possession of the Divine. As in the case of circumcision on the eighth day, of the "great day" of the feast on the eighth day, or of the resurrection of our Lord on the first day of the week, following the previous seven days, it expressed a new beginning in active power. By a similar process the number six was held to signify inability to reach the sacred point and hopeless falling short of it. To the Jew there was thus a doom upon the number six even when it stood alone. Triple it; let there be a multiple of it by ten and then a second time by ten until you obtain three mysterious *sixes* following one another, 666; and we have represented a potency of evil than which there can be none greater, a direfulness of fate than which there can be none worse. The *number* then is important, not the *name*. Putting ourselves into the position of the time, we listen to the words, *His number is six hundred sixty and six;*

and we have enough to make us tremble. Nay, there is in them a depth of sin and a weight of punishment which no one can "know" but he who has committed the sin and shared the punishment.

From all that has been said it would seem that there is no possibility of finding the name of the beast in the name of any single individual who has yet appeared upon the stage of history. It may well be that in Nero, or Domitian, or any other persecutor of the Church, the Seer beheld a type of the beast; but the whole strain of the chapter forbids the supposition that the meaning of the name is exhausted in any single individual. No merely human ruler, no ruler over merely a portion of the world however large, no ruler who had not died and risen from the grave, and who after his resurrection had not been hailed with enthusiasm by "every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation," can be the beast referred to. Whether St. John expected such a ruler in the future; whether this beast, like the "little horn" of Daniel, which had "eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things,"[1] was not only bestial, but human; or whether in its individuality it was no more than a personification of antichristian sin and cruelty, is another and a more difficult question. Yet his tendency to represent abstract ideas by concrete images would lead to the latter rather than the former supposition. One thing is clear: that the bestial principle was already working, although it might not have reached its full development. The "many antichrists"[2] might be the precursors of a still more terrible Antichrist, but they worked in the same spirit and towards the same end. Nor are they to be less the

[1] Dan. vii. 8. [2] Comp. 1 John ii. 18.

object of alienation and abhorrence to the Christian now than when they may be concentrated in "the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of His mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of His coming.

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* 2 Thess. ii. 8.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LAMB ON THE MOUNT ZION AND THE HARVEST AND VINTAGE OF THE WORLD.

Rev. xiv.

THE twelfth and thirteenth chapters of this book were designed to set before us a picture of the three great enemies of the Church of Christ. We have been told of the dragon, the principle and root of all the evil, whether inward or outward, from which that Church suffers. He is the first enemy. We have been further told of the first beast, of that power or prince of the world to whom the dragon has committed his authority. He is the second enemy. Lastly, we have been told of that false spirit of religion which unites itself to the world, and which, even more opposed than the world itself to the unworldly spirit of Christianity, makes the relation of God's children to the world worse than it might otherwise have been. The picture thus presented is in the highest degree fitted to depress and to discourage. The thought more especially of faithlessness in the Church fills the heart with sorrow. The saddest feature in the sufferings of Jesus was that He was "wounded in the house of His friends;" and there is a greater than ordinary depth of pathos in the words with which the beloved disciple draws to a close his record of his Master's struggle

with the Jews: "These things spake Jesus; and He departed, and was hidden from them. But though He had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on Him: that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?"[1]

Even then, however, it was not wholly darkness and defeat, for the Evangelist immediately adds, "Nevertheless even of the rulers many believed on Him;" and he closes the struggle with the words of calm self-confidence on the part of Jesus, "The things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto Me, so I speak."[2] Thus also is it here, and we pass from the dark spectacle on which our eyes have rested to a scene of heavenly light, and beauty, and repose. The reader may indeed at first imagine that the symmetry of structure which has been pointed out as a characteristic of the Apocalypse is not preserved by the arrangement of its parts in the present instance. We are about to meet in the following chapter the third and last series of plagues; and we might perhaps expect that the consolatory visions contained in this chapter ought to have found a place between the sixth and seventh Bowls, just as the consolatory visions of chap. vii. and of chaps. x. and xi. found their place between the sixth and seventh Seals and the sixth and seventh Trumpets. Instead of this the seventh Bowl, at chap. xv. 17, immediately follows the sixth, at ver. 12 of the same chapter; and the visions of encouragement contained in the chapter before us precede all the Bowls. The explanation may be that the Bowls are the last and

[1] John xii. 36-38. [2] Vers. 42, 50.

highest series of judgments, and that when they begin there can be no more pause. One plague must rush upon another till the end is reached. The final judgments brook neither interruption nor delay.

In this spirit we turn to the first vision of chap. xiv. :—

And I saw, and, behold, the Lamb standing on the mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and the voice which I heard was as the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sang as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the elders: and no man could learn the song save the hundred and forty and four thousand, even they that had been purchased out of the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were purchased from among men, a first-fruits unto God and unto the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no lie; they are without blemish (xiv. 1-5).

The scene of the vision is "the mount Zion," that Zion so often spoken of both in the Old and in the New Testament as God's peculiar seat, and in the eyes of Israel famous for the beauty of its morning dews.[1] It is the Zion in which God "dwells,"[2] the mount Zion which He "loved,"[3] and "out of which salvation comes."[4] It is that "holy hill of Zion" upon which God set the Son as King when He said to Him, "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee."[5] It is that Zion, too, to which "the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads."[6] Finally, it is that home of which the sacred writer, writing to the Hebrews, says, "Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and

[1] Ps. cxxxiii. 3. [2] Ps. lxxviii. 68. [3] Ps. ii. 6, 7.
[4] Ps. ix. 11. [5] Ps. xiv. 7. [6] Isa. xxxv. 10

unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better than that of Abel."[1] Upon this mount Zion the Lamb—that is, the crucified and risen Lamb of chap. v.—stands, firm, self-possessed, and calm.

There is more, however, than outward beauty or sacred memories to mark the scene to which we are introduced. Mount Zion may be "beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King."[2] But there is music for the ear as well as beauty for the eye. The mount resounds with song, rich and full of meaning to those who can understand it. A voice is heard from heaven which seems to be distinguished from the voice of the hundred and forty and four thousand to be immediately spoken of. We are not told from whom it comes; but it is there, *as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, and as the voice of harpers harping with their harps.* Majesty and sweetness mark it. It is the music that is ever in God's presence, not the music of angels only, or glorified saints, or a redeemed creation. More probably it is that of all of them together. And the song which they sing is *new*, like that of chap. v. 9, which is sung by "the four living creatures and the four-and-twenty elders, who have each one a harp, and golden bowls of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." That song the Church on earth understands,

[1] Heb. xii. 22-24. [2] Ps. xlviii. 2.

and she alone can understand. It spoke of truths which the redeemed alone could appreciate, and of joys which they alone could value. There is a communion of saints, of all saints on earth and of all who fill the courts of the Lord's house on high. Even now the Church can listen with ravished ear to songs which she shall hereafter join in singing.

Standing beside the Lamb upon Mount Zion, there are *a hundred and forty and four thousand, having the Lamb's name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads*, in token of their priestly state. We cannot avoid asking, Are these the same hundred and forty and four thousand of whom we have read in chap. vii. as sealed upon their foreheads, or are they different? The natural inference is that they are the same. To use such a peculiar number of two different portions of the Church of God would lead to a confusion inconsistent with the usually plain and direct, even though mystical, statements of this book. Besides which they have the mark or seal of God in both cases on the same part of their bodies,—the forehead. It is true that the definite article is not prefixed to the number; but neither is that article prefixed to the "glassy sea" of chap. xv. 1, and yet no one doubts that this is the same "glassy sea" as that of chap. iv. Besides which the absence of the article may be accounted for by the fact that the reference is not *directly* to the hundred and forty and four thousand of chap. vii. 4, but to the innumerable multitude of chap. vii. 9.[1] We have already seen, however, that these two companies are the same, although the persons composing them are viewed in different lights; and the hundred and forty and four

[1] Comp. Lee in *Speaker's Commentary in loc.* The distinction between the two references is there wrongly given.

thousand here correspond, not to the first, but to the second, company. They are in full possession of their Christian privileges and joys. They are not "in heaven," in the ordinary meaning of that term. They are on earth. But the two companies formerly mentioned meet in them. They are both sealed, and in the presence of the Lamb.

The character of the hundred and forty and four thousand next claims our thoughts.

1. They were *not defiled with women, for they are virgins.* The words cannot be literally understood, but must be taken in the sense of similar words of the Apostle Paul, when, writing to the Corinthians, he says, "For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one Husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ."[1] Such "a pure virgin" were the hundred and forty and four thousand now standing upon the mount Zion. They had renounced all that unfaithfulness to God and to Divine truth which is so often spoken of in the Old Testament as spiritual fornication or adultery. They had renounced all sin. In the language of St. John in his first Epistle, they had "the true God, and eternal life." They had "guarded themselves from idols."[2]

2. They *follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.* They shrink from no part of the Redeemer's life whether on earth or in heaven. They follow Him in His humiliation, labours, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension. They obey the command "Follow thou Me"[3] in prosperity or adversity, in joy or sorrow, in persecution or triumph. Wherever their Lord is

[1] 2 Cor. xi. 2. [2] 1 John v. 20, 21. [3] John xxi. 22.

they also are, one with Him, members of His Body and partakers of His Spirit.

3. They are *purchased from among men, a first-fruits unto God and unto the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no lie; they are without blemish.* Upon the fact that they are "purchased" it is unnecessary to dwell. We have already met with the expression in chap. v. 9, in one of the triumphant songs of the redeemed. Nor does it seem needful to speak of the moral qualifications here enumerated, further than to observe that in other parts of this book the "lie" is expressly said to exclude from the new Jerusalem, and to be a mark of those upon whom the door is shut,[1] while the epithet "without blemish" is elsewhere, on more than one occasion, applied to our Lord.[2]

The appellation "a first-fruits" demands more notice. The figure is drawn from the well-known offering of "first-fruits" under the Jewish law, in which the first portion of any harvest was dedicated to God, in token that the whole belonged to Him, and was recognised as His. Hence it always implies that something of the same kind will follow it, and in this sense it is often used in the New Testament: "If the first-fruit is holy, so is the lump;" "Epænetus, who is the first-fruits of Asia unto Christ;" "Now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of them that are asleep;" "Ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the first-fruits of Achaia."[3] In like manner the mention of the hundred and forty and four thousand as "first-fruits" suggests the thought of something to follow. What that is it is more difficult to say. It can hardly be

[1] Chaps. xxi. 27; xxii. 15.

[2] Heb. ix. 14; 1 Pet. i. 19.

[3] Rom. xi. 16 xvi. 5; 1 Cor. xv. 20; xvi. 15.

other Christians belonging to a later age of the Church's history upon earth, for the end is come. It can hardly be Christians who have done or suffered more than other members of the Christian family, for in St. John's eyes all Christians are united to Christ, alike in work and martyrdom. Only one supposition remains. The hundred and forty and four thousand, as the whole Church of God, are spoken of in the sense in which the same expression is used by the Apostle James: "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures."[1] Not as the first portion of the Church on earth, to be followed by another portion, but as the first portion of a kingdom of God wider and larger than the Church, are the words to be understood. The whole Church is God's first-fruits; and when she is laid upon His altar, we have the promise that a time is coming when creation shall follow in her train, when "it shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God,"[2] when "the mountains and the hills shall break forth before the Redeemer into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."[3]

Why shall nature thus rejoice before the Lord? Let the Psalmist answer: "For He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth."[4] This thought may introduce us to the next portion of the chapter:—

And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, having an eternal gospel to proclaim over them that sit on the earth, and over every nation, and tribe, and tongue, and people; and he saith with a great

[1] James i. 18.
[2] Rom. viii. 21.
[3] Isa. lv. 12.
[4] Ps. xcvi. 13.

voice, Fear God, and give Him glory; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made the heaven, and the earth, and sea, and fountains of waters.

And another, a second angel, followed, saying, Fallen, fallen, is Babylon the great, which hath made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a great voice, If any man worshippeth the beast and his image, and receiveth a mark on his forehead, or upon his hand, he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mingled unmixed in the cup of His anger; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment goeth up unto ages of ages: and they have no rest day and night, they that worship the beast and his image, and whoso receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their toils; for their works follow with them.

And I saw, and behold a white cloud, and on the cloud I saw One sitting like unto a Son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle.

And another angel came out from the temple, crying with a great voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Send forth Thy sickle, and reap: for the hour to reap is come; for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe. And He that sat on the cloud cast His sickle upon the earth; and the earth was reaped.

And another angel came out from the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

And another angel came out from the altar, he that hath power over fire; and he called with a great voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Send forth thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her bunches of grapes are ripe. And the angel cast his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the winepress, the great winepress, of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and there came out blood from the winepress, even unto the bridles of the horses, as far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs (xiv. 6-20).

The first point to be noticed in connexion with these verses is their structure, for the structure is of importance to the interpretation. The passage as a

whole, it will be easily observed, consists of seven parts, the first three and the last three being introduced by an "angel," while the central or chief part is occupied with One who, from the description, can be no other than our Lord Himself. In this part it is also obvious that the Lord comes to wind up the history of the world, and to gather in that harvest of His people which is already fully or even overripe. There can be no doubt, therefore, that we are here at the very close of the present dispensation; and, as five out of the six parts which are grouped around the central figure are occupied with judgment on the wicked, the presumption is that the only remaining part, the first of the six, will be occupied with the same topic.

In this first part indeed we read of *an eternal gospel proclaimed over them that sit on the earth, and over every nation, and tribe, and tongue, and people;* and the first impression made upon us is that we have here a universal and final proclamation of the glad tidings of great joy, in order that the world may yet, at the last moment, repent, believe, and be saved. But such an interpretation, however plausible and generally accepted, must be set aside. The light thrown upon the words by their position in the series of seven parts already spoken of is a powerful argument against it. Everything in the passage itself leads to the same conclusion. We do not read, as we ought, were this the meaning, to have read, of "the," but of "an," eternal gospel. This gospel is proclaimed, not "unto," but "over," those to whom it is addressed. Its hearers do not "dwell," as in both the Authorised and Revised Versions, but, as in the margin of the latter, "sit," on the earth, in the sinful world, in the carelessness of

pride and self-confident security. Thus the great harlot "sitteth upon many waters;" and thus Babylon says in her heart, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall in no wise see mourning."[1] There is no humiliation, no spirit of repentance, no preparation for the Gospel, here; while the mention of the "earth" and the fourfold division of its inhabitants lead us to think of men continuing in their sins, over whom a doom is to be pronounced.[2] Still further, the words put into the mouth of him who speaks "with a great voice," and which appear to contain the substance of the gospel thus proclaimed, have in them no sound of mercy, no story of love, no mention of the name of Jesus. They speak of *fearing God and giving glory to Him*, as even the lost may do,[3] of the *hour*, not even the "day," *of His judgment;* and they describe the rule of the great Creator by bringing together the four things—*the heaven, and the earth, and sea, and fountains of waters*—upon which judgment has already fallen in the series of the Trumpets, and is yet to fall in that of the Bowls.[4] Lastly, the description given of the angel reminds us so much of the description given of the "eagle" in chap. viii. 13 as to make it at least probable that his mission is a similar one of woe.

In the light of all these circumstances, we seem compelled to come to the conclusion that the "gospel" referred to is a proclamation of judgment, that it is that side of the Saviour's mission in which He appears as the winnowing fan by which His enemies are scattered as the chaff, while His disciples are gathered as the wheat. There is no intimation here, then, of a conversion of the world. The world stands self-

[1] Chaps. xvii. 1; xviii. 7.
[2] Comp. chaps. xi. 9; xiii. 7.
[3] Comp. James ii. 19.
[4] Chaps. viii., xv.

convicted before the bar of judgment, to hear its doom.

The cry of the second angel corresponds to that of the first. It proclaims the fall of Babylon and its cause. The deeply interesting questions relating to this city will meet us at a later point. In the meantime it is enough to observe that Babylon is described as *fallen*. The Judge is not only standing at the door: He has begun His work.

The words of the third angel continue the strain thus begun, and constitute the most terrible picture of the fate of the ungodly to be found in Scripture. The eye shrinks from the spectacle. The heart fails with fear when the words are read. That *wine of the wrath of God which is mingled unmixed in the cup of His anger*, that wine into which, contrary to the usage of the time, no water, no mitigating element, has been allowed to enter; that *torment with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb;* that *smoke of their torment going up unto ages of ages;* that *no-rest day and night*, of so different a kind from the no-rest of which we have read in chap. iv. 8—all present a picture from which we can hardly do aught else than turn away with trembling. Can this be the Gospel of Jesus, the Lamb of God? Can this be a revelation given to the disciple whom Jesus loved, and who had entered so deeply into his Master's spirit of tenderness and compassion for the sinner?

1. Let us consider that the words are addressed, not directly to sinners, but to the Church of Christ, which is safe from the threatened doom; not to the former that they may be led to repentance, but to the latter that through the thought of what she has escaped she may be filled with eternal gratitude and joy.

2. Let us notice the degree to which sin is here supposed to have developed; that it is not the sin of Mary in the house of Simon, of the penitent thief, of the Philippian gaoler, or of the publicans and harlots who gathered around our Lord in the days of His flesh to listen to Him, but sin bold, determined, loved, and clung to as the sinner's self-chosen good, the sin of sinners who will die for sin as martyrs die for Christ and holiness. 3. Let us observe that, whatever the angel may mean, he certainly does not speak of never-ending existence in never-ending torment, for the words of the original unhappily translated both in the Authorised and Revised Versions "for ever and ever" ought properly to be rendered "unto ages of ages;"[1] and, distinguished as they are on this occasion alone in the Apocalypse from the first of these expressions by the absence of the Greek articles, they ought not to be translated in the same way. 4. Let us recall the strong figures of speech in which the inhabitants of the East were wont to give utterance to their feelings, figures illustrated in the present instance by the mention of that "fire and brimstone" which no man will interpret literally, as well as by the language of St. Jude when he describes Sodom and Gomorrah as "an example of eternal fire."[2] 5. Let us remember that hatred of sin is the correlative of love of goodness, and that the kingdom of God cannot be fully established in the world until sin has been completely banished from it. 6. Above all, let us mark carefully the distinction, so often forced upon us in the writings of St. John, between sinners in the ordinary sense and the system

[1] They are so rendered in the margin of the Revised Version.
[2] Jude 7 (margin of R.V.).

of sin to which other sinners cling in deadliest enmity to God and righteousness; and, as we do all this, the words of the third angel will produce on us another than their first impression. So far as the human being is before us we shall be moved only to compassion and eagerness to save. But his sin, the sin which has mastered the Divinely implanted elements of his nature, which has fouled what God made pure and embittered what God made sweet, the sin which has subjected one created in the nobility of the image of God to the miserable thraldom of the devil, the sin the thought of which we can separate, like the Apostle Paul, from the "I" of man's true nature[1]—of that sin we can only say, Let the wrath of God be poured out upon it unmingled with mercy; let it be destroyed with a destruction the memory of which shall last "unto ages of ages" and even take its place amidst the verities sustaining the throne of the Eternal and securing the obedience and the happiness of His creatures.[2] If a minister of Christ thinks that he may gather from this passage, or others similar to it, a commission to go to sinners rather than to sin with "tidings of damnation," he mistakes alike the Master whom he serves and the commission with which he has been entrusted.

At this point, after the thought of that spirit of allegiance to the beast which draws down such terrors upon itself, and before we reach the central figure of the whole movement, we have some words of comfort interposed. The meaning of the first part of them is similar to that of chap. xiii. 10, and need not be further spoken of. The meaning of their second part, con-

[1] Rom. vii. [2] Comp. p. 108.

veying to us the contents of the "voice from heaven," demands a moment's notice. *Blessed*, exclaims the heavenly voice (at the same time prefixing the command *Write*), *are the dead which die in the Lora from henceforth.* It is difficult to determine the precise point of time referred to in the word "henceforth." If it be the moment of the end, the moment of the Second Coming of the Lord, then the promise must express the glory of the resurrection. But, to say nothing of the fact that "resting from labours" is too weak to bring out the glory of the resurrection state, there is at that instant no more time to die in the Lord. The living shall be "changed." It seems better, therefore, to understand the words as a voice of consolation running throughout the whole Christian age. In the view of "heaven" the lapse of time is hardly thought of. All is Now. The meaning of "dying in the Lord," again, must not be regarded as equivalent to the Scriptural expression "falling asleep in Jesus." Not the thought of "falling asleep" in a quiet Christian home, but of "dying" as Jesus died, is in the Seer's mind; and not the thought of rest from work, but of rest from *toils*, an entirely different and far stronger word, is in the answer of the Spirit. Thus are believers blessed. Their life is a life of toil, of hardship, of trial, of persecution, of death; but when they die, they "rest." And their "works"—that is, their Christian character and life—are not lost. They *follow with them*, and meet them again in the heavenly mansions as the record of all that they have done and suffered in their Master's cause.

The first three angels have accomplished their task. We now reach the fourth and chief member in this series of seven, and meet with the Lord as He comes to take His people to Himself, that where He is, there

they may also be. That it is the Lord who is here before us we cannot for a moment doubt. The designation *like unto a Son of man*, the same as that of chap. i. 13, itself establishes the fact, which is again confirmed by the mention of the *white cloud* and of the *golden crown*. *In His hand* He holds *a sharp sickle*, with which to reap. Thus also in different passages of the New Testament our Lord speaks of the harvest of His people, although in them He acts by His angels and Apostles.[1] In one passage of the Gospel of St. John He acts by Himself.[2] The glorified Redeemer is thus ready to complete His work.

Another angel now appears, the first of the second series of three, and styled "another," not by comparison with Him who sat on the white cloud, and who is exalted far above all angels, but by comparison with the angels previously spoken of at the sixth, eighth, and ninth verses of the chapter. This angel is said to come *out from the temple*—that is, out of the *naos*, out of the innermost shrine of the temple—and the notice is important, for it shows that he comes from the immediate presence of God, and is a messenger from Him. Therefore it is that he can say to the Son, *Send forth Thy sickle, and reap.* "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing."[3] Until the Father gives the sign His "hour is not yet come;" and more especially of the hour now arrived Jesus had Himself said, "But of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."[4] The day, the hour, the moment, has now arrived; and, as usual in this book, the message of the Father is communicated

[1] Matt. ix. 37, 38; xiii. 29, 30.
[2] John xiv. 3.
[3] John v. 19.
[4] Mark xiii. 32.

by an angel. The intimation that the hour is come is grounded upon the fact that the harvest about to be gathered in is *fully ripe.* The Revised Version translates "overripe;" but the translation, though literal, is unhappy, and so far false as it unquestionably suggests a false idea. God's time for working is always right, not wrong; and it is perfectly legitimate to understand the word of the original as meaning simply dry, hard, the soft juices of its ripening state absorbed, and the time of its firmness come.[1] Thus summoned by the message of the Father to the work, the Son enters upon it without delay. "As He hears, He judges."[2] *He that sat on the cloud cast His sickle upon the earth; and the earth was reaped.*

The second angel of the second group of three next appears, having, like Him that sat upon the cloud, "a sharp sickle;" and he too waits for the summons to use it.

This summons is given by the third angel of the second group, of whom it is said that he *came out from the altar, he that hath power over fire.* The altar of this verse must be that already spoken of in chap. viii. 3, where we were told that "another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer," an altar which we have been led to identify with the brazen altar of chap. v. 9, beneath which were found the souls of the Old Testament saints; and the "fire" over which this angel has power must be the "fire" of chap. viii. 5, the fire taken from that altar to kindle the incense of the prayers of the saints. The angel is thus a messenger of judgment, about to command a final and full answer to be given to the prayer that the

[1] Comp. the "dried up" of the margin of the Revised Version.

[2] John v. 30.

Almighty will finish His work and vindicate His cause. To this character, accordingly, his message corresponds, for *he called with a great voice to him* (that is, to the second angel) *that had the sharp sickle, saying, Send forth thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her bunches of grapes are ripe.* A vintage, not a harvest of grain, is here before us; and it is impossible to doubt that it is the purpose of the Seer to draw a broad line of distinction between the two. The latter is the harvest of the good; the former is the vintage of the evil: and the propriety of the figure thus used for the evil is easily perceived when we remember that grapes were gathered to be trodden in the winefat, and that the juice when trodden out had the colour of blood. The figure was indeed one already familiar to the prophets: "Let the nations bestir themselves, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat" (that is, The Lord judges): "for there will I sit to judge all the nations round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the vintage is ripe: come, tread ye; for the winepress is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great;"[1] "Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel, and Thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was no man with Me: yea, I trod them in Mine anger, and trampled them in My fury; and their life-blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My raiment. For the day of vengeance is in Mine heart, and My year of redemption is come."[2] The figure is here employed in a similar manner, for the angel *gathered the vine* (not "the vintage," the whole vine being plucked up by the roots)

[1] Joel iii. 12, 13. [2] Isa. lxiii. 2-4.

of the earth, and cast it into the winepress, the great winepress, of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and there came out blood from the winepress, even unto the bridles of the horses, as far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs. In these words we have undoubtedly the judgment of the wicked, and the last portion of them alone need detain us for a moment.

1. What is meant by the statement that the sea of blood thus created by the slaughter spoken of reached "even unto the bridles of the horses"? The horses are those of chap. xix. 11-16, where we have again a description of the final victory of Christ over all His enemies, and where it is again said of Him that "He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God."[1] The same winepress which meets us here meets us there. The battle and the victory are the same; and the horses here are therefore those upon which He that is called Faithful and True, together with His armies that are in heaven, rides forth to conquest. The mention of "the bridles" of the horses is more uncertain and more difficult to explain, but one passage of the Old Testament helps us. In speaking of the glories of the latter day, the prophet Zechariah says, "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses (the bells strung along the bridles) HOLY UNTO THE LORD."[2] The sea of blood reached to, but could not be allowed to touch, these sacred words.

2. What is meant by the space of "a thousand and six hundred furlongs," over which the sea extended? To resolve it simply into a large space is at variance

[1] Ver. 15 [2] Zech. xiv. 20.

with the spirit of the Apocalypse; and to imagine that it marks the extent of the Holy Land from Dan to Beersheba is both to introduce an incorrect calculation and to forget who constitute the hosts of wickedness that had been engaged in the battle. These were not the inhabitants of Palestine only, but of "the earth," three times mentioned in the description. They were "all the nations" spoken of by the second angel of the first group, all that worship the beast and his image and receive a mark on their forehead or their hand, referred to by the third angel of the same group. They are thus the wicked gathered from every corner of the earth. With this idea the figures 1,600 agree—four, the number of the world, multiplied by itself to express intensity, and then by a hundred, the number so often associated with evil in this book. Whether "furlongs," literally "stadia," are chosen as the measure of space because, as suggested by Cornelius a Lapide, the arena or circus in which the martyrs suffered was called "The Stadium,"[1] it may be vain to conjecture. Enough that the sixteen hundred furlongs represent the whole surface of the earth upon which the wicked "sit" at ease, the universal efficacy of the sickle by which they are gathered to their doom.

One other point ought to be more particularly noticed before we close the consideration of this chapter. The harvest of the good is gathered in by the Lord Himself, that of the wicked by His angel. The same lesson appears to be read in the parables of the tares and of the drawnet. In the former (although allusions in each parable may seem to imply that angels take part in both acts) it is said that "at the end of the

[1] Comp. 1 Cor. ix. 24.

world the Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity."[1] In the latter we read, "So shall it be in the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire."[2] In like manner here. The Son of man Himself gathers His own to their eternal rest. It is an angel, though commissioned by Him, who gathers the wicked to their fate. "And is there not a beauty and tenderness in this contrast? It is as though that Son of man and Son of God who is the Judge of quick and dead, the Judge alike of the righteous and of the wicked, loved one half of His office, and loved not the other. It is as though He cherished as His own prerogative the harvest of the earth, and were glad to delegate to other hands the vintage. It is as though the ministry of mercy were His chosen office, and the ministry of wrath His stern necessity. One like unto the Son of man puts forth the sickle of the ingathering; one of created, though it be of angelic, nature is employed to send forth the sickle of destruction."[3]

[1] Matt. xiii. 41. [2] Matt. xiii. 49, 50. [3] Vaughan, *u. s.*, p. 378.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SEVEN BOWLS.

Rev. xv., xvi.

NOTHING can more clearly prove that the Revelation of St. John is not written upon chronological principles than the scenes to which we are introduced in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of the book. We have already been taken to the end. We have seen in chap. xiv. the Son of man upon the throne of judgment, the harvest of the righteous, and the vintage of the wicked. Yet we are now met by another series of visions setting before us judgments that must take place before the final issue. This is not chronology; it is apocalyptic vision, which again and again turns round the kaleidoscope of the future, and delights to behold under different aspects the same great principles of the Almighty's government, leading always to the same glorious results.

One other preliminary observation may be made. The third series of judgments does not really begin till we reach chap. xvi. Chap. xv. is introductory, and we are thus reminded that the series of the Trumpets had a similar introduction in chap. viii. 1-6. It is the manner of St. John, who thus in his Gospel introduces his account of our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus in chap. iii. by the last three verses of chap. ii., which

ought to be connected with the third chapter; and who also introduces his narrative regarding the woman of Samaria by the first three verses of chap. iv.

To introduce chap. xvi. is the object of chap. xv.

And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having seven plagues, which are the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God (xv. 1).

The plagues about to be spoken of are "the last," and in them the final judgments of God upon evil are contained. What they are, and who are the special objects of them, will afterwards appear. Meanwhile, another vision is presented to our view:—

And I saw as it were a glassy sea mingled with fire; and them that come victorious out of the beast, and out of his image, and out of the number of his name, standing upon the glassy sea, having harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, O Lord God the Almighty; righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the nations. Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy: for all the nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy righteous acts have been made manifest (xv. 2-4).

It can hardly be doubted that the *glassy sea* spoken of in these words is the same as that already met with at chap. iv. 6. Yet again, as in the case of the hundred and forty and four thousand of chap. xiv. 1, the definite article is wanting; and, in all probability, for the same reason. The aspect in which the object is viewed, though not the object itself, is different. The glassy sea is here *mingled with fire*, a point of which no mention was made in chap. iv. The difference may be explained if we remember that the "fire" spoken of can only be that of the judgments by which the Almighty vindicates His cause, or of the trials by which He purifies His people. As these, therefore,

now stand upon the sea, delivered from every adversary, we are reminded of the troubles which by Divine grace they have been enabled to surmount. It was otherwise in chap. iv. No persons were there connected with the sea, and it stretched away, clear as crystal, before Him all whose dealings with His people are "right." The sea itself is in both cases the same, but in the latter it is beheld from the Divine point of view, in the former from the human.

The vision as a whole takes us back to the exodus of Israel from Egypt, and hence the mention of *the song of Moses, the servant of God.* The enemies of the Church have their type in Pharaoh and his host as they pursue Israel across the sands which had been laid bare for the passage of the chosen people; the waters, driven back for a time, return to their ancient bed; the hostile force, with its chariots and its chosen captains, "goes down into the depths like a stone;" and Israel raises its song of victory, "I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea."[1]

The song now sung, however, is not that of Moses only, the great centre of the Old Testament Dispensation; it is also *the Song of the Lamb,* the centre and the sum of the New Testament. Both Dispensations are in the Seer's thoughts, and in the number of those who sing are included the saints of each, the members of the one Universal Church. No disciple of Jesus either before or after His first coming is omitted. Every one is there from whose hands the bonds of the world have fallen off, and who has cast in his lot with the followers of the Lamb. Hence also the song

[1] Exod. xv. 1.

is wider in its range than that by which the thought of it appears to have been suggested. It celebrates the *great and marvellous works* of the Almighty in general. It speaks of Him as the *King of the nations*, that is, as the King who subdues the nations under Him. It rejoices in the fact that His *righteous acts have been made manifest*. And it anticipates the time when *all the nations shall come and worship before* Him, shall bow themselves at His feet, and shall acknowledge that His judgments against sin are not only just in themselves, but are allowed to be so by the very persons on whom they fall.

A second vision follows :—

And after these things I saw, and the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened; and there came out from the temple the seven angels that had the seven plagues, clothed with a precious stone pure and lustrous, and girt about their breasts with golden girdles. And one of the four living creatures gave unto the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His power: and none was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished (xv. 5-8).

The *temple* spoken of is, as upon every occasion when the word is used, the shrine or innermost sanctuary, the Holy of holies, the peculiar dwelling-place of the Most High; so that the seven angels with the seven last plagues come from God's immediate presence. But this sanctuary is now beheld in a different light from that in which it was seen in chap. xi. 19. There it contained the ark of God's covenant, the symbol of His grace. Here the eye is directed to the *testimony*, to the two tables of the law which were kept in the ark, and were God's witness both to the holiness of His character and the justice of His government. The

giving of the law then was in the Seer's mind, and that fact will explain the allusions to the Old Testament found in his words. The description of the seven angels, as *clothed with a precious stone pure and lustrous* (not with "fine linen" as in the Authorised Version) may be explained, when we attend to the second characteristic of their appearance, *girt about their breasts with golden girdles*. These words take us back to the vision of the Son of man in chap. i., where the same expression occurs, and where we have already seen that it points to the priests of Israel, when engaged in the active service of the sanctuary. The angels now spoken of are thus priestly after the fashion of the Lord Himself, who is not merely the Priest but also the High Priest of His people. The high priest, however, wore a jewelled breastplate; and in correspondence with the nobler functions of the New Testament priesthood, these jewels are now extended to the whole clothing of the angels spoken of. A similar figure for the clothing of the glorified Church meets us in the prophecies of Isaiah: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness; as a bridegroom decketh himself (the margin of the Revised Version calling attention to the fact that the meaning of the original is "decketh himself as a priest") with a garland, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels;"[1] while the same figure, though applied to Tyre, is employed by Ezekiel: "Every precious stone was thy covering."[2] The seven angels are thus about to engage in a priestly work.

[1] Isa. lxi. 10. [2] Ezek. xxviii. 13.

This work is pointed out to them by *one of the four living creatures*, the representatives of redeemed creation. All creation owns the propriety of the judgments now about to be fulfilled.[1]

These judgments are contained, not in seven "vials," as in the Authorised Version, but in *seven golden bowls*, vessels probably of a saucer shape, of no great depth, and their circumference largest at the rim. They are the "basins" of the Old Testament, used for carrying into the sanctuary the incense which had been lighted by fire from the brazen altar. They were thus much better adapted than "vials" for the execution of a final judgment. Their contents could be poured out at once and suddenly.

The bowls have been delivered to the angels, and nothing remains but to pour them out. The moment is one of terror, and it is fitting that even all outward things shall correspond. *Smoke*, therefore, filled *the sanctuary*, and *none was able to enter into it.* Thus, when Moses reared up the tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord filled it, "Moses was not able to enter into the tent of meeting:"[2] thus, when Solomon dedicated the temple and the cloud filled the house of the Lord, "The priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud."[3] Thus, when Isaiah beheld the glory of the Lord in His temple, and heard the cry of the Seraphim, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts," "the foundations of the thresholds were moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke;"[4] and thus, above all, when the law was given, "Mount Sinai was altogether on smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended

[1] Comp. chap. vi.
[2] Exod. xl. 35.
[3] 1 Kings viii. 11.
[4] Isa. vi. 4.

as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly."[1]

All due preparation having been made, the Seven Bowls are now poured out in rapid and uninterrupted succession. As in the case of the Seals and of the Trumpets, they are divided into two groups of four and three; and those of the first group may be taken together:—

And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go ye, and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth. And the first went, and poured out his bowl into the earth; and it became a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and which worshipped his image. And the second poured out his bowl into the sea; and it became blood as of a dead man, and every living soul died, even the things that were in the sea. And the third poured out his bowl into the rivers and the fountains of the waters; and it became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying, Righteous art Thou which art and which wast, Thou holy one, because Thou didst thus judge: for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and blood hast Thou given them to drink: they are worthy. And I heard the altar saying, Yea, O Lord, God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments. And the fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given unto it to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat: and they blasphemed the name of the God which hath the power over these plagues; and they repented not to give Him glory (xvi. 1-9).

Upon the particulars of these plagues it is unnecessary to dwell. No attempt to determine the special meaning of the objects thus visited by the wrath of God—the land, the sea, the rivers and fountains of the waters, and the sun—has yet been, or is ever perhaps likely to be, successful; and the general effect alone appears to be important. The chief point claiming attention is the singular closeness of the parallelism between them and the Trumpet plagues, a parallelism which extends also to the fifth, sixth, and seventh

[1] Exod. xix. 18; Heb. xii. 18.

members of the series. Close, however, as it is, there is also a marked climax in the later plagues, corresponding to the fact that they are "the last," and that in them "the wrath of God is finished."[1] Thus the first Trumpet affects only the third part of the earth, and the trees, and all green grass: the first Bowl affects *men*.[2] Under the second Trumpet the "third part" of the sea becomes blood, and the third part of the creatures which are in the sea die, and the third part of the ships are destroyed: under the second Bowl, the "third part" of the sea is exchanged for the whole; the blood assumes its most offensive form, *blood as of a dead man;* and not the third part only, but *every living soul died, even the things that were in the sea*."[3] Under the third Trumpet the great star falls only upon the "third part" of the rivers and fountains, and they become wormwood: under the third Bowl all the waters are visited by the plague, and they become blood.[4] Lastly, under the fourth Trumpet only the "third part" of sun and moon and stars is smitten: under the fourth Bowl the whole sun is affected, and it is *given unto it to scorch men with fire*.[5] With this climactic character of the Bowls as compared with the Trumpets may also be connected a striking addition made to the details of the third Bowl, to which in the Trumpet series there is nothing to correspond. *The angel of the waters*, not an angel to whom the smiting of the waters had been entrusted, but the waters themselves speaking through their angel, and *the altar*, that is, the brazen

[1] Chap. xv. 1.
[2] Comp. chap. viii. 7 and xvi. 2.
[3] Comp. chap. viii. 8, 9, and xvi. 3.
[4] Comp. chap. viii. 10, 11 and xvi. 4.
[5] Comp. chap. viii. 12 and xvi. 8.

altar of chap. vi. 9, respond to the judgments executed. They recognise the true and righteous character of the Almighty, and they welcome this manifestation of Himself to men.

Another feature of these Bowls will at once strike the reader,—their correspondence to some of the plagues of Egypt: for in the first we see a repetition, as it were, of that sixth plague by which Pharaoh and his people were visited, when Moses sprinkled ashes of the furnace towards heaven, and they became "a boil breaking forth with blains upon man and beast,"[1] and in the second and third a repetition of the first plague, when Moses lifted up his rod and smote the waters that were in the river, "and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood."[2] The fourth Bowl reminds us of the terror of the appearance of the Son of man in chap. i. 16, when "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

One other characteristic of these plagues ou[ght] be noticed. It comes to view no doubt only un[der] fourth, yet, as we shall immediately see, it is n[ot] confined to it. The plagues had no softenin[g] verting power. On the contrary, as at chap. [ix.] the impiety of the worshippers of the beas[t] aggravated by their sufferings; and, instead [of] to Him who had power over the plague[s] phemed His name.

From the first group of Bowls we t[urn] embracing the last three in the seri[es]

And the fifth poured out his bowl [upon] and his kingdom was darkened; [and] pain, and they blasphemed th[e] and their sores; and they [repented]

[1] Exod. [ix.]

The transition from the realm of nature to the spiritual world, already marked at the introduction of the fifth Seal and of the fifth Trumpet, is here again observable; but, as in the case of the sixth Trumpet, the spiritual world alluded to is that of the prince of darkness. With darkness he is smitten. That there is a reference to the darkness which, at the word of Moses, fell upon the land of Egypt when visited by its plagues can hardly be doubted, for the darkness of that plague was not ordinary darkness; it was "a darkness that might be felt."[1] More than darkness, however, is alluded to. We are told of *their pains and of their sores.* But pains and sores are not an effect produced by darkness. They can, therefore, be only those of the first Bowl, a conclusion confirmed by the use of the word "plagues" instead of plague. The ference to be drawn from this is important, for we s learn that the effects of any earlier Bowl are not usted before the contents of one following are rged. Each Bowl rather adds fresh punishment of its predecessors, and all of them go on ting their terrors to the end. Nothing could rly show how impossible it is to interpret es literally, and how mistaken is any effort em to the particular events of history.

Bowl follows :—

red out his bowl upon the great river, the river ater thereof was dried up, that the way might ings that come from the sun-rising. And I uth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of outh of the false prophet, three unclean are spirits of devils, working signs, whole inhabited earth, to gather t day of God, the Almighty.

(Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.) And they gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon (xvi. 12-16).

Probably no part of the Apocalypse has received more varied interpretation than the first statement of this Bowl. Who are these *kings that come from the sun-rising* is the point to be determined; and the answer usually given is, that they are part of the anti-christian host, part of those afterwards spoken of as *the kings of the whole inhabited earth*, before whom God dries up the Euphrates in order that they may pursue an uninterrupted march to the spot on which they are to be overwhelmed with a final and complete destruction. Something may certainly be said on behalf of such a view; yet it is exposed to serious objections.

1. We have already at chap. ix. 14, at the sounding of the sixth Trumpet, been made acquainted with the river Euphrates; and, so far from being a hindrance to the progress of Christ's enemies, it is rather the symbol of their overflowing and destructive might. 2. We have also met at chap. vii. 2 with the expression "from the sun-rising," and it is there applied to the quarter from which the angel comes by whom the people of God are sealed. In a book so carefully written as the Apocalypse, it is not easy to think of anti-christian foes coming from a quarter described in the same terms. 3. These kings "from the sun-rising" are not said to be a part of "the kings of the whole inhabited earth" immediately afterwards referred to. They are rather distinguished from them. 4. The "preparing of the way" connects itself with the thought of Him whose way was prepared by the coming of the Baptist. 5. The type of drying up the waters of a

river takes us back, alike in the historical and prophetic writings of the Old Testament, to the means by which the Almighty secures the deliverance of His people, not the destruction of His enemies. Thus the waters of the Red Sea were dried up, not for the overthrow of the Egyptians, but for the safety of Israel, and the bed of the river Jordan was dried up for a similar purpose. Thus, too, the prophet Isaiah speaks: "And the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea, and with His scorching wind shall He shake His hand over the river, and shall smite it into seven streams, and cause men to march over dryshod. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of His people, which shall return, from Assyria; like as there was for Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt."[1] Again the same prophet celebrates the great deeds of the arm of the Lord in the following words: "Art thou not it which dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; that made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over?"[2] And, once more, to a similar effect the prophet Zechariah: "I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria. . . . And He shall pass through the sea of affliction, and shall smite the waves of the sea, and all the depths of the Nile shall dry up. . . . And I will strengthen them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and down in His name, saith the Lord."[3] It is unnecessary to say more. In these "kings from the sun-rising" we have an emblem of the remnant of the Israel of God as they return from all the places whither they have been led captive, and as God makes their way plain before them.

[1] Isa. xi. 15, 16. [2] Isa. li. 10. [3] Zech. x. 10-12.

Nor is this all. In the fate of these foes a striking incident of Old Testament history is repeated, in order that they may be led to the destruction which awaits them. When Micaiah warned Ahab of his approaching fate, and told him of the lying spirit by which his own prophets were urging him to the battle, he said, "I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left. And the Lord said, Who shall entice Ahab that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner; and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will entice him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And He said, Thou shalt entice him, and shalt prevail also; go forth and do so."[1] In that incident of Ahab's reign is found the type of the three lying spirits or demons which, like frogs, unclean, noisy, and loquacious, go forth from the three great enemies of the Church, the dragon, the first beast, and the second beast, now first called *the false prophet*, that they may entice the "kings of the whole inhabited earth" to their overthrow. And they succeed. All unknowing of what is before them, proud of their strength, and flushed with hope of victory, these kings listen to the demons and gather themselves together *unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty*. It is a supreme moment in the history of the Church and of the world; and, before he names the battlefield which shall, in its very name, be prophetic of the fate of the wicked, the Seer pauses to behold the assembled armies. Upon

[1] 1 Kings xxii. 19-22.

the one side is a little flock, but they are all "kings," and before them is He by whom, like David before the host of Israel and over against the Philistines, the battle shall be fought and the victory won. On the other side are the hosts of earth in all their multitudes, gathered together by the deceitful promise of success. The Seer hears the voice of the Captain of salvation, *Behold I come as a thief*, to break up and to destroy. He hears further the promise of blessing to all who are faithful to the Redeemer's cause: and then, with mind at rest as to the result, he names the place where the final battle is to be fought, *Har-Magedon*.

Why Har-Magedon? There was, we have every reason to believe, no such place. The name is symbolical. It is a compound word derived from the Hebrew, and signifying the mountain of Megiddo. We are thus again taken back to Old Testament history, in which the great plain of Megiddo, the most extensive in Palestine, plays on more than one occasion a notable part. In particular, that plain was famous for two great slaughters, that of the Canaanitish host by Barak, celebrated in the song of Deborah,[1] and that in which King Josiah fell.[2] The former is probably alluded to, for the enemies of Israel were there completely routed. For a similar though still more terrible destruction the hosts of evil are assembled at Har-Magedon. The Seer thinks it enough to assemble them, and to name the place. He does not need to go further or to describe the victory.

The seventh Bowl now follows :—

And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying, It is

[1] Judges v. [2] 2 Chron. xxxv. 22.

done; and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since there were men upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And great hail, every stone about the weight of a talent, cometh down out of heaven upon men: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof is exceeding great (xvi. 17-21).

The seventh or last Bowl is poured out into the air, here thought of as the realm of that prince of this world who is also "the prince of the power of the air."[1] All else, land and sea and waters and sun and the throne of the beast, has now been smitten so that evil has only to suffer its final blow. It has been searched out everywhere; and therefore the end may come. That end comes, and is spoken of in figures more strongly coloured than those of either the sixth Seal or the seventh Trumpet. First of all *a great voice is heard out of the* (sanctuary of the) *temple, from the throne, saying, It is done*, God's plan is executed. His last manifestation of Himself in judgment has been made. This voice is then accompanied by a more terrible shaking of the heavens and the earth than we have as yet been called to witness, the earthquake in particular being *such as was not since there were men upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty.*

Some of the effects of the earthquake are next spoken of. More especially, *The great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell.* As to the meaning of "the cities of the nations" there can be no doubt. They are the strongholds of the world's sin, the places from which ungodliness and impiety have

[1] Ephes. ii. 2.

ruled. Under the shaking of the earthquake they fall in ruins. The first words as to "the great city" must be considered in connexion with the words which follow regarding Babylon, and they are more difficult to interpret. By some it is contended that the "great city" is Jerusalem, by others that it is Babylon. The expression is one which the Apocalypse must itself explain, and in seeking the explanation we must proceed upon the principle that in this book, as much as in any other of the New Testament, the rules of all good writing are followed, and that the meaning of the same words is not arbitrarily changed. When this rule, accordingly, is observed, we find that the epithet is, in chap. xi. 8, distinctly applied to Jerusalem, the words "the great city, where also their Lord was crucified" leaving no doubt upon the point. But, in chap. xviii. 10, 16, 18, 19, 21, the same epithet is not less distinctly applied to Babylon. The only legitimate conclusion is, that there is a sense in which Jerusalem and Babylon are one. This corresponds exactly to what we otherwise learn of the light in which the metropolis of Israel appeared to St. John. To him as an Apostle of the Lord, and during the time that he followed Jesus in the flesh, Jerusalem presented itself in a twofold aspect. It was the city of God's solemnities, the centre of the old Divine theocracy, the "holy city," the "beloved city."[1] But it was also the city of "the Jews," the city which scorned and rejected and crucified its rightful King. When in later life he beheld, in the picture once exhibited around him and graven upon his memory, the type of the future history and fortunes of the Church, the two Jerusalems again rose before his

[1] Chap. xi. 2, xx. 9.

view, the one the emblem of all that was most precious, the other of all that was most repulsive, in the eyes both of God and of spiritually enlightened men. The first of these Jerusalems is the true Church of Christ, the faithful remnant, the little flock that knew the Good Shepherd's voice and followed Him. The second is the degenerate Church, the mass of those who misinterpreted the aim and spirit of their calling, and who by their worldliness and sin "crucified their Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame." In the latter aspect Jerusalem *becomes* Babylon. As in chap. xi. 8 it became "spiritually," that is mystically, "Sodom and Egypt," so it becomes also the mystical Babylon, partaker of that city's sins, and doomed to its fate. This thought we shall find fully expanded in the following chapter. The question may indeed be asked, how it comes to pass that, if this representation be correct, we should read, immediately after the words now under consideration, that *Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.* But the answer is substantially contained in what has been said. When Jerusalem is first thought of as "the great city," it is as the city of "the Jews," as the centre and essence of those principles by which spiritual is transformed into formal religion, and all sins are permitted to hide and multiply under the cloak of a merely outward piety. When it is next thought of as Babylon, the conception is extended so as to embrace, not a false Judaism only, but a similar falseness in the bosom of the universal Church. Just as "the great city where also our Lord was crucified" widened in chap. xi. 8 to the thought of Sodom and Egypt, so here it widens to the thought of Babylon. May it not be added that we have thus in the mention

of Jerusalem and Babylon a counterpart to the mention in chap. xv. 3 of "the song of Moses and the Lamb"? These two expressions, as we have seen, comprehend a song of *universal* victory. Thus also the two expressions, "the great city" and "Babylon," having one and the same idea at their root, comprehend all who in the professing Church of the whole world are faithless to Christian truth.

Further effects of the last judgment follow. *Every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.* Effects similar, though not so terrible, had been connected with the sixth Seal. Mountains and islands had then been simply "moved out of their places."[1] Now they "flee away." Similar effects will again meet us, but in an enhanced degree.[2] As yet, while mountains and islands flee away, the earth and the heavens remain. In the last description of the judgment of the wicked the heavens and the earth themselves flee away from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and no place is found for them. The climax in the different accounts of what is substantially the same event cannot be mistaken.

The same climax appears in the statement of the next effect, the *great hail, every stone about the weight of a talent*, that is, fully more than fifty pounds. No such weight had been spoken of at the close of the seventh Trumpet in chap. xi. 19.

Again, however, there is no repentance and no conversion. Those who suffer are the deliberate and determined followers of the beast. As under the fourth Bowl, therefore, so under the seventh they rather blaspheme God amidst their sufferings, *because of the plague of the hail, for the plague thereof is exceeding great.*

[1] Chap. vi. 14. [2] Chap. xx. 11.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BEAST AND BABYLON.

Rev. xvii.

AT the close of chap. xvi. we reached the end of the three great series of judgments which constitute the chief contents of the Revelation of St. John,—the series of the Seals, the Trumpets, and the Bowls. It cannot surprise us, however, that at this point other visions of judgment are to follow. Already we had reached the end at chap. vi. 17, and again at chap. xi. 18; yet on both occasions the same general subject was immediately afterwards renewed, and the same truths were again presented to us, though in a different aspect and with heightened colouring. We are prepared therefore to meet something of the same kind now. Yet it is not the whole history of that "little season" with which the Apocalypse deals that is brought under our notice in fresh and striking vision. One great topic, the greatest that has hitherto been spoken of, is selected for fuller treatment,—the fall of Babylon. Twice before we have heard of Babylon and of her doom,—at chap. xiv. 8, when the second angel of the first group gathered around the Lord as He came to judgment exclaimed, "Fallen, fallen, is Babylon the great, which hath made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication;" and

again at chap. xvi. 19, when under the seventh Bowl we were told that "Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath." So much importance, however, is attached by the Seer to the fortunes of this city that two chapters of his book—the seventeenth and the eighteenth—are devoted to the more detailed descriptions of her and of her fate. These two chapters form one of the most striking, if at the same time one of the most difficult, portions of his book. We have first to listen to the language of St. John; and, long as the passage is, it will be necessary to take the whole of chap. xvii. at once:—

And there came one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls, and spake with me, saying, Come hither; I will show thee the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters: with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and they that dwell in the earth were made drunken with the wine of her fornication. And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness: and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication, and upon her forehead a name written, Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I marvelled with a great marvelling. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and the ten horns. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss: and he goeth into perdition. And they that dwell on the earth shall marvel, they whose name hath not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast, how that he was, and is not, and shall be present. Here is the mind that hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And they are seven kings: the five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come; and

when he cometh, he must continue a little while. And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goeth into perdition. And the ten horns that thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. These have one mind, and they give their power and authority unto the beast. These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they also shall overcome that are with Him called, and chosen, and faithful. And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which thou sawest, and the beast, these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her utterly with fire. For God did put in their hearts to do His mind, and to come to one mind, and to give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God should be accomplished. And the woman whom thou sawest is the great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth (xvii.).

The main questions connected with the interpretation of this chapter are, What are we to understand by the beast spoken of, and what by Babylon? The Seer is summoned by one of the angels that had the seven Bowls to behold a spectacle which fills him with *a great marvelling*. Thus summoned, he obeys; and he is immediately carried away into a wilderness, where he sees *a woman sitting upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns*.

1. What is this beast, and what in particular is his relation to the beast of chap. xiii.?

At first sight the points of difference appear to be neither few nor unimportant. The order of the heads and of the horns is different, the horns taking precedence of the heads in the earlier, the heads of the horns in the later, of the two.[1] The first is said to have had upon "his heads" names of blasphemy; the second is

[1] Comp. chaps. xiii. 1 and xvii. 3, 7.

"full of" such names.[1] There are diadems on the horns of the former, but not of the latter. Of the first we are told that he comes up "out of the sea," of the second that he is about to come up "out of the abyss."[2] In addition to these particulars, it will be observed that several traits of the first beast are not mentioned in connexion with the second. These last points of difference may be easily set aside. They create no inconsistency between the descriptions given; and we have already had occasion for the remark, that it is the manner of the Seer to enlarge in one part of his book his account of an object also referred to in another part. His readers are expected to combine the different particulars in order to form a complete conception of the object.

The more positive points of difference, again, may be simply and naturally explained. In chap. xiii. 1 the horns take precedence of the heads because the beast is beheld rising up out of the sea, the horns in this case appearing before the heads. In the second case, when the beast is seen in the wilderness, the order of nature is preserved. The distribution of the names of blasphemy is in all probability to be accounted for in a similar manner. At the moment when the Seer beholds them in chap. xiii. his attention has been arrested by the heads of the beast, and he has not yet seen the whole body. When he beholds them in chap. xvii., the entire beast is before him, and is "full of" such names. The presence of diadems upon the ten horns in the first, and their absence in the second, beast depends upon the consideration that it is a common method of St. John to dwell upon an object

[1] Comp. chaps. xiii. 1 and xvii. 3.
[2] Comp. chaps. xiii. 1 and xvii. 3, 12.
[3] Comp. chaps. xiii. 1 and xvii. 8.

presented to him ideally before he treats it historically.[1] We know that the ten horns are ten kings or kingdoms[2]; and the diadem is the appropriate symbol of royalty. When therefore we think of the beast in his ideal or ultimate manifestation in the ten kings of whom we are shortly to read, we think of the horns as crowned with diadems; and it is thus accordingly that we see the beast in chap. xiii. On the other hand, at the point immediately before us "the ten kings have received no kingdom as yet;"[3] and the diadems are wanting. The application of this principle further explains the difference between what are apparently two origins for these beasts,—"the sea" and "the abyss." The former is mentioned in chap. xiii., because there we have the beast before us in himself, and in the source from which he springs. The latter is mentioned in chap. xvii., because the beast has now reached a definite period of his history to which the coming up out of "the abyss" belongs. The "sea" is his real source; the "abyss" has been only his temporary abode. The monster springs out of the sea, lives, dies, goes into the abyss, rises from the dead, is roused to his last paroxysm of rage, is defeated, and passes into perdition.[4] This last is his *history* in chap. xvii., and that history is in perfect harmony with what is stated of him in chap. xiii.,—that by nature he comes up out of the sea.

While the points of difference between the beasts of chap. xiii. and chap. xvii. may thus without difficulty be reconciled, the points of agreement are such as to lead directly to the identification of the two. Some of these have already come under our notice in speaking

[1] Comp. pp. 75, 199.
[2] Chap. xvii. 12.
[3] Chap. xvii. 12.
[4] Chap. xvii. 11.

of the differences. Others are still more striking. Thus the beast of chap. xiii. is described as the vicegerent of the dragon[1]; and the object of the dragon is to make war upon the remnant of the woman's seed.[2] When therefore we find the beast of chap. xvii. engaged in the same work,[3] we must either resort to the most unlikely of all conclusions—that the dragon has two vicegerents—or we must admit that the two beasts are one. Again, the characteristic of a rising from the dead is so unexpected and mysterious that it is extremely difficult to assign it to two different agencies; yet we formerly saw that this characteristic belongs to the beast of chap. xiii., and we shall immediately see that it belongs also to that of chap. xvii. Nay more, it is to be noticed that both in chap. xiii. and in chap. xvii. the marvelling of the world after the beast is connected with his resurrection state.[4] This was undoubtedly the case in chap. xiii.; and in the present chapter the cause of the world's astonishment is not less expressly said to be its beholding in the beast *how that he was, and is not, and shall be present.*[5] Let us add to what has been said that the figures of the Apocalypse are the product of so rich and fertile an imagination that, had a difference between the two beasts been intended, it would, we may believe, have been more distinctly marked; and the conclusion is inevitable that the beast before us is that also of the thirteenth chapter.

Turning then to the beast as here represented, we have to note one or two particulars regarding him, either new or stated with greater fulness and precision

[1] Chap. xiii. 2.
[2] Chap. xii. 17.
[3] Chap. xvii. 14.
[4] Comp. p. 222.
[5] Ver. 8.

than before; while, at the same time, we have the explanation of the angel to help us in interpreting the vision.

(1) The beast *was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss: and he goeth into perdition.* The words are a travesty of what we read of the Son of man in chap. i.: "I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I became dead: and, behold, I am alive for evermore."[1] An antichrist is before us, who has been slaughtered unto death, and the stroke of whose death shall be healed.[2] Still further we seem entitled to infer that when this beast appears he shall have the marks of his death upon him. *They that dwell on the earth shall marvel when they behold the beast, how that he was, and is not, and shall be present.* The inference is fair that there must be something *visible* upon him by which these different states may be distinguished. In other words, the beast exhibits marks which show that he had both died and passed through death. He is the counterpart of "the Lamb standing as though it had been slaughtered."[3]

(2) *The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And they are seven kings: the five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a little while.* Notwithstanding all that has been said to the contrary by numerous and able expositors, these words cannot be applied directly to any seven emperors of Rome. It may be granted that the Seer had the thought of Rome sitting upon its seven hills in his eye as one of the manifestations of the beast, but the whole tenor of his language is too wide and comprehensive to permit

[1] Chap. i. 18. [2] Comp. chap. xiii. 3. [3] Chap. v. 6.

the thought that the beast itself is Rome. Besides this, the heads are spoken of as being also "mountains;" and we cannot say of any five of the seven hills of Rome that they "are fallen," or of any one of them that it is "not yet come." Nor could even any five successive kings of Rome be described as "fallen," for that word denotes passing away, not simply by death, but by violent and conspicuous overthrow;[1] and no series of five emperors in other respects suitable to the circumstances can be mentioned some of whom at least did not die peaceably in their beds. Finally, the word "kings" in the language of prophecy denotes, not personal kings, but kingdoms.[2] These seven "mountains" or seven "kings," therefore, are the manifestations of the beast in successive eras of oppression suffered by the people of God. Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, and Greece are the first five; and they are "fallen"—fallen in the open ruin which they brought upon themselves by wickedness. Rome is the sixth, and "it is" in the Apostle's days. The seventh will come when Rome, beheld by the Seer as on the brink of destruction, has perished, and when its mighty empire has been rent in pieces. These pieces will then be the ten horns which occupy the place of the seventh head. They will be even more wicked and more oppressive to the true followers of Christ than the great single empires which preceded them. In them the antichristian might of the beast will culminate. They are "ten" in number. They cover the whole "earth." That universality of dominion which was always the beast's ideal will then become

[1] Comp. chaps. vi. 13; viii. 10; ix. 1; xi. 13; xiv. 8; xvi. 19; xviii. 2.

[2] Comp. Dan. vii. 17, 23; Rev. xviii. 3.

his actual possession. They *receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour;* and together with him they shall rage against the Lamb. Hence—

(3) *And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven.* The reader will notice that the expression of the eighth verse of the chapter "and is about to come up out of the abyss," as also another expression of the same verse, "and shall be present," are here dropped. We have met with a similar omission in the case of the Lord Himself at chap. xi. 17, and the explanation now is the same as then. The beast can no more be thought of as "about to come up out of the abyss," because he is viewed as come, or as about "to be present," because he is present. In other words, the beast has attained the highest point of his history and action. He has reached a position analogous to that of our Lord after His resurrection and exaltation, when all authority was given Him both in heaven and on earth, and when He began the dispensation of the Spirit, founding His Church, strengthening her for the execution of her mission, and perfecting her for her glorious future. In like manner at the time here spoken of the beast is at the summit of his evil influence. In one sense he is the same beast as he was in Egypt, in Assyria, in Babylonia, in Persia, in Greece, and in Rome. In another sense he is not the same, for the wickedness of all these earlier stages has been concentrated into one. He has "great wrath, knowing that he has but a short season."[1] At the last moment he rages with the keen and determined energy of despair. Thus he may be spoken of as "an eighth;" and thus he is also

[1] Chap. xii. 12.

"of the seven," not one of the seven, but the highest, and fiercest, and most cruel embodiment of them all. Thus also he is identified with the "Little Horn" of Daniel, which has "eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things."[1] That Little Horn takes the place of three out of the ten horns which are plucked up by the roots; that is, of the eighth, ninth, and tenth horns. It is thus itself an eighth; and we have already had occasion to notice that in the science of numbers the number eight marks the beginning of a new life, with quickened and heightened powers. Thus also fresh light is thrown upon the statement which so closely follows the description of the beast,—that *he goeth into perdition.* As in the case of Belshazzar, of Nebuchadnezzar, and of the traitor Judas, the instant when he reaches the summit of his guilty ambition is also the instant of his fall.

Before proceeding to consider the meaning of the "Babylon" spoken of in this chapter, it may be well to recall for a moment the principle lying at the bottom of the exposition now given of the "beast." That principle is that St. John sees in the world-power, or power of the world, the contrast, or travesty, or mocking counterpart of the true Christ, of the world's rightful King. The latter lived, died, was buried, rose from the grave, and returned to His Father to work with quickened energy and to enjoy everlasting glory; the former lived, was brought to nought by Christ, was plunged into the abyss, came up out of the abyss, reached his highest point of influence, and went into perdition. Such is the form in which the Seer's visions take possession of his mind; and it will be

[1] Dan. vii. 7, 8.

seen that the mould of thought is precisely the same as that of chap. xx. The fact that it is so may be regarded as a proof that the interpretation yet to be offered of that chapter is correct.

It may be further noticed that the beast's being brought to nought and being sent into the abyss takes place under the sixth, or Roman, head. We know that this was actually the case, because it was under the Roman government that our Lord gained His victory. The history of the beast, however, does not close with this defeat. He must rise again; and he does this as the seventh head, which is associated with the ten horns. In them and "with" them he assumes a greater power than ever, gaining all the additional force which is connected with a resurrection life. The objection may indeed be made that such an exposition is not in correspondence either with the view taken in this commentary that the beast is active from the very beginning of the Christian era, or with those facts of history which show that, instead of falling, Rome continued to exist for a lengthened period after the completion of the Redeemer's victory.

But, as to the first of these difficulties, it is not necessary to think that the beast rages in his highest and ultimate form from the very instant when Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to His Father. That was rather the moment of the beast's destruction, the moment when, under the sixth head, he "is and is not;" and a certain extent of time must be interposed before he rises in his new, or seventh, head. The Seer, too, deals largely in climax; and, although in doing so he is always occupied with the climactic idea rather than with the time needed for its manifestation, the element of time, if our attention is called to it, must be allowed its

place. Now in the development of the beast there is climax. In chap. xi. 7 it is said that "the beast that cometh up out of the abyss shall make war with" the two faithful witnesses "when they shall have finished their testimony," and this finishing of their testimony implies time. Again, in chap. xii. 17 the increased wrath of the dragon against the remnant of the woman's seed appears to be subsequent to the persecution of the woman in the same chapter.[1] No doubt the thought of the increased wrath of the dragon is the main point, but it may be quite truly said that some time at least is needed for the increase. The view, therefore, that the beast rages from the beginning of the Christian era, from the moment when he rises after his fall, or, in other words, is loosed after having been shut up into the abyss, is not inconsistent with the view that his rage goes on augmenting until it attains its culminating point.

The answer to the second difficulty is to be found in the consideration that to the Seer the whole Christian era appears no more than "a little season," in which events must follow closely on one another, so closely that the time required for their evolution passes almost entirely, if not indeed entirely, out of his field of vision. He has no thought that Rome will last for centuries. "The times or the seasons the Father hath set within His own authority."[2] The guilt of Rome is so dark and frightful that the Seer can fix his mind upon nothing but that overthrow which shall be the just punishment of her crimes. She is not to be doomed; she is doomed. She is not to perish; she is perishing. Divine vengeance has already overtaken her. Her

[1] Chap. xii. 13. [2] Acts i. 7.

last hour is come; and the ten kings who are to follow her are already upon their thrones. Thus these kings come into immediate juxtaposition with the beast in that last stage of his history which had begun, but had not reached its greatest intensity, before Rome is supposed to fall.

2. The second figure of this chapter now meets us; and we have to ask, Who is the woman that sits on the beast? or, What is meant by Babylon?

No more important question can be asked in connexion with the interpretation of the Apocalypse. The thought of Babylon is evidently one by which the writer is moved to a greater than ordinary degree. Twice already have we had premonitions of her doom, and that in language which shows how deeply it was felt.[1] In the passage before us he is awed by the contemplation of her splendour and her guilt. And in chap. xviii. he describes the lamentation of the world over her fate in language of almost unparalleled sublimity and pathos. What is Babylon? We must make up our minds upon the point, or the effort to interpret one of the most important parts of the Revelation of St. John can result in nothing but defeat.

Very various opinions have been entertained as to the meaning of Babylon, of which the most famous are that the word is a name for papal Rome, pagan Rome, or a great world-city of the future which shall stand to the whole earth in a relation similar to that occupied by Rome towards the world of its day. These opinions cannot be discussed here; and no more can be attempted than to show, with as much brevity as possible, that by Babylon is to be understood the de-

[1] Chaps. xiv. 8; xvi. 19.

generate Church, or that principle of degenerate religion which allies itself with the world, and more than all else brings dishonour upon the name and the cause of Christ.

(1) Babylon is the representative of religious, not civil, degeneracy and wickedness. She is a harlot, and her name is associated with the most reckless and unrestrained fornication. But fornication and adultery are throughout the Old Testament the emblem of religious degeneracy, and not of civil misrule. In numerous passages familiar to every reader of Scripture both terms are employed to describe the departure of Israel from the worship of Jehovah and a holy life to the worship of idols and the degrading sensuality by which such worship was everywhere accompanied. Nor ought we to imagine that adultery, not fornication, is the most suitable expression for religious degeneracy. In some important respects the latter is the more suitable of the two. It brings out more strongly the ideas of playing the harlot with "many lovers"[1] and of sinning for "hire."[2] In this sense then it seems proper to understand the charge of fornication brought in so many passages of the Apocalypse against Babylon. Not in their civil, but in their religious, aspect have the kings of the earth committed fornication with her, and they that dwell on the earth been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. Her sin has been that of leading men astray from the worship of the true God, and of substituting for the purity and unworldliness of Christian living the irreligious and worldly spirit of the "earth." To this it may be added that, had Babylon not been the symbol of religious declension, she could hardly have borne upon her forehead the term MYSTERY.

[1] Jer. iii. 1. [2] Micah i. 7.

St. John could not have used a word connected only with religious associations to express anything but a religious state awakening the awe, and wonder, and perplexity of a religious mind. Babylon, therefore, represents persons who are not only sinful, but who have fallen into sin by treachery to a high and holy standard formerly acknowledged by them.

(2) We have already had occasion to allude to a fact which must immediately receive further notice,—that to the eye of St. John there is an aspect of Jerusalem different from that in which she is regarded as the holy and beloved city of God. Jerusalem in that aspect and Babylon are one. Each is "the great city," and the same epithet could not be applied to both were they not to be identified. Not only so. The words here used of Babylon lead us directly to what our Lord once said of Jerusalem. "Therefore," said Jesus, "behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: some of them shall ye kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous unto the blood of Zachariah son of Barachiah, whom ye slew between the sanctuary and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation."[1] Precisely similar to this is the language of the Seer, *And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.*

It may indeed be thought impossible that under any circumstances whatever St. John could have applied an epithet like that of Babylon, steeped in so many

[1] Matt. xxiii. 34-36.

associations of lust, and bloodshed, and oppression, to the metropolis of Israel, the city of God. But in this very book he has illustrated the reverse. He has already spoken of Jerusalem as represented by names felt by a pious Jew to be the most terrible of the Old Testament,—"Sodom and Egypt."[1] The prophets before him had employed language no less severe. "Hear the word of the Lord," said Isaiah, addressing the inhabitants of the holy city, "ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah,"[2] and again, "How is the faithful city become an harlot, she that was full of judgment! righteousness lodged in her; but now murderers;"[3] whilst the degenerate metropolis of Israel is not unfrequently painted by Jeremiah and Ezekiel and other prophets in colours than which none more dark or repulsive can be conceived.

In forming a conclusion upon this point, it is necessary to bear in mind that to the eye of the faithful in Israel, and certainly of St. John, there were two Jerusalems, the one true, the other false, to its heavenly King; and that in exact proportion to the feelings of admiration, love, and devotion with which they turned to the one were those of pain, indignation, and alienation with which they turned from the other. The latter Jerusalem, the city of "the Jews," is that of which the Apocalyptist thinks when he speaks of it as Babylon; and, looking upon the city in this aspect as he did, the whole language of the Old Testament fully justifies him in applying to it the opprobrious name.

(3) The contrast between the new Jerusalem and Babylon leads to the same conclusion. We have already

[1] Chap. xi. 8. [2] Isa. i. 10. [3] Isa. i. 21

more than once had occasion to allude to the principle of *antithesis*, or contrast, as affording an important rule of interpretation in many passages of this book. Nowhere is it more distinctly marked or more applicable than in the case before us. The contrast has been drawn out by a recent writer in the following words:—

"These prophecies present two broadly contrasted *women*, identified with two broadly contrasted *cities*, one reality being in each case doubly represented: as a *woman* and as a *city*. The harlot and Babylon are one; the bride and the heavenly Jerusalem are one.

"The two women are contrasted in every particular that is mentioned about them: the one is pure as purity itself, 'made ready' and fit for heaven's unsullied holiness, the other foul as corruption could make her, fit only for the fires of destruction.

"The one belongs to the Lamb, who loves her as the bridegroom loves the bride; the other is associated with a wild beast, and with the kings of the earth, who ultimately hate and destroy her.

"The one is clothed with fine linen, and in another place is said to be clothed with the sun and crowned with a coronet of stars: that is, robed in Divine righteousness and resplendent with heavenly glory; the other is attired in scarlet and gold, in jewels and pearls, gorgeous indeed, but with earthly splendour only. The one is represented as a chaste virgin, espoused to Christ; the other is mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.

"The one is persecuted, pressed hard by the dragon, driven into the wilderness, and well-nigh overwhelmed; the other is drunken with martyr blood, and *seated on* a beast which has received its power from the persecuting dragon.

"The one sojourns in solitude in the wilderness; the

other reigns 'in the wilderness' over peoples, and nations, and kindreds, and tongues.

"The one goes in with the Lamb to the marriage supper, amid the glad hallelujahs; the other is stripped, insulted, torn, and destroyed by her guilty paramours.

"We lose sight of the bride amid the effulgence of heavenly glory and joy, and of the harlot amid the gloom and darkness of the smoke that 'rose up for ever and ever.'"[1]

A contrast presented in so many striking particulars leaves only one conclusion possible. The two cities are the counterparts of one another. But we know that by the first is represented the bride, the Lamb's wife, or the true Church of Christ as, separated from the world, she remains faithful to her Lord, is purified from sin, and is made meet for that eternal home into which there enters nothing that defiles. What can the other be but the representative of a false and degenerate Church, of a Church that has yielded to the temptations of the world, and has turned back in heart from the trials of the wilderness to the flesh-pots of Egypt? Every feature of the description answers, although with the heightened colour of ideal portraiture, to what such a professing but degenerate Church becomes,—the pride, the show, the love of luxury, the subordination of the future to the present. Even her very cruelty to the poor saints of God is drawn from actual reality, and has been depicted upon many a page of history. With the meek and lowly followers of Jesus, whose life is a constant protest that the things of time are nothing in comparison with those of eternity, none have less sympathy than those who have a name to live

[1] Guinness, *The Approaching End of the Age*, p. 143.

while they are dead. The world may admire, even while it cannot understand, these little ones, these lambs of the flock; but to those who seek the life that now is by the help of the life that is to come they are a perpetual reproach, and they are felt to be so. Therefore they are persecuted in such manner and to such degree as the times will tolerate.

One other remark has to be made upon the identification of Jerusalem and Babylon by the Seer. It has been said that he has one special aspect of the metropolis of Israel in his eye. Yet we are not to suppose that he confines himself to that metropolis. As on so many other occasions, he starts from what is limited and local only to pass in thought to what is unlimited and universal. His Jerusalem, his Babylon, is not the literal city. She is "the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters;" and "the waters which thou sawest," says the angel to the Seer, "are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues."[1] The fourfold division guides us, as usual, to the thought of dominion over the whole earth. Babylon is not the Jerusalem only of "the Jews." She is the great Church of God throughout the world when that Church becomes faithless to her true Lord and King.

Babylon then is not pagan Rome. No doubt seven mountains are spoken of on which the woman sitteth. But this was not peculiar to Rome. Both Babylon and Jerusalem are also said to have been situated upon seven hills; and even if we had before us, as we certainly may have, a distinct reference to Rome, it would be only because Rome was one of the manifestations of the beast, and because the city afforded a suitable point of departure for a wider survey. The very

[1] Chap. xvii. 15.

closing words of the chapter, upon which so much stress is laid by those who find the harlot in pagan Rome, negative, instead of justifying, the supposition: *And the woman whom thou sawest is the great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.* Rome never possessed such universal dominion as is here referred to. She may illustrate, but she cannot exhaust, that subtler, more penetrating, and more widespread spirit which is in the Seer's view.

Again, Babylon cannot be papal Rome. As in the last case, there may indeed be a most intimate connexion between her and one of the manifestations of Babylon. But it is impossible to speak of the papal Church as the guide, the counsellor, and the inspirer of anti-christian efforts to dethrone the Redeemer, and to substitute the world or the devil in His stead. The papal Church has toiled, and suffered, and died for Christ. Babylon never did so.

Nor, finally, can we think of Babylon as a great city of the future which shall stand to the kings and kingdoms of the earth in a relation similar to that in which ancient Rome stood to the kings and kingdoms of her day. Wholly apart from the impossibility of our forming any clear conception of such a city, the want of the religious or spiritual element is fatal to the theory.

One explanation alone seems to meet the conditions of the case. Babylon is the world in the Church. In whatever section of the Church, or in whatever age of her history, an unspiritual and earthly element prevails, there is Babylon.

We have spoken of the two great figures of this chapter separately. We have still to speak of their relation to one another, and of the manner in which it is brought suddenly and for ever to a close.

This relation appears in the words, *I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-coloured beast*, and in later words of the chapter: *the beast that carrieth her*. The woman then is not subordinate to the beast, but is rather his controller and guide. And this relation is precisely what we should expect. The beast is before us in his final stage, in that immediately preceding his own destruction. He is no longer in the form of Egypt, or Assyria, or Babylonia, or Persia, or Greece, or Rome. These six forms of his manifestation have passed away. The restrainer has been withdrawn,[1] and the beast has stepped forth in the plenitude of his power. He has been revealed as the "ten horns" which occupy the place of the seventh head; and these ten horns are ten kings who, having now received their kingdoms and with their kingdoms their diadems, are the actual manifestation in history of the beast as he had been seen in his ideal form in chap. xiii. The beast is therefore the spirit of the world, partly in its secularising influence, partly in its brute force, in that tyranny and oppression which it exercises against the children of God. The woman, again, is the spirit of false religion and religious zeal, which had shown itself under all previous forms of worldly domination, and which was destined to show itself more than ever under the last. To the eye of St. John this spirit was not confined to Christian times. The woman, considered in herself, is not simply the false Christian Church. She is so at the moment when *we* behold her on the field of history. But St. John did not believe that saving truth, the truth which unites us to Christ, the truth which is "of God," was to be found in Christianity

[1] Comp. 2 Thess. ii. 7.

alone. It had existed in Judaism. It had existed even in Heathenism, for in his Gospel he remembers and quotes the words of our Lord in which Jesus says, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock, one Shepherd."[1] As then Divine truth, the light which never ceases to contend with the darkness, had been present in the world under every one of its successive kingdoms, so also perversions of that truth had never failed to be present by its side. All along the line of past history, in Heathenism as well as in Judaism, the ideal bride of Christ had been putting on her ornaments to meet the Bridegroom; and not less all along the same line had the harlot been arraying herself in purple and scarlet and decking herself with gold and precious stones and jewels, that she might tempt men to resist the influence of their rightful King. The harlot had been always thus superior to the beast. The beast had only the powers of this world at his command; the harlot wielded the powers of another and a higher world. The one dealt only with the seen and temporal, the other with the unseen and eternal, the one with material forces, the other with those spiritual forces which reach the profoundest depths of the human heart and give rise to the greatest movements of human history. The woman is therefore superior to the beast. She inspires and animates him. The beast only lends her the material strength needed for the execution of her plans. In the war, accordingly, which is carried on by the ten kings who have *one mind, and who give their power and authority unto the beast*, in the war which the beast and

[1] John x. 16.

they, with their combined power, wage *for one hour* against the Lamb, it would be a great mistake to suppose that the woman, although she is not mentioned, takes no part and exerts no influence. She is really there, the prime mover in all its horrors. The "one mind" comes from her. The beast can do nothing of himself. The ten kings who are the form in which he appears are not less weak and helpless. They have the outward power, but they cannot regulate it. They want the skill, the subtlety, the wisdom, which are found only in the spiritual domain. But the great harlot, who at this point of history is the perversion of *Christian* truth, is with them; and they depend on her. Such is the first part of the relation between the beast and the harlot.

A second, most unexpected and most startling, follows.

We have seen that in the war between the ten kings and the Lamb the woman is present. That war ends in disaster to her and to those whom she inspires. *The Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings.* The name is the same as that which we shall afterwards meet in chap. xix. 16, though the order of the clauses is different. This Lamb, therefore, is here the Conqueror described in chap. xix. 11-16; and many particulars of these latter verses take us back to the Son of man as He appeared in chap. i., or, in other words, to the risen and glorified Redeemer. The thought of the risen Christ is thus in the mind of St. John when he speaks of the Lamb who shall overcome. The leaders of the Jewish Church had believed that they had for ever rid themselves of the Prophet who "tormenteth them that dwell on the earth."[1] They had sealed the stone, and set a watch, and returned to

[1] Comp. chap. xi. 10.

their homes for joy and merriment. But on the third morning there was a great earthquake, and the stone was rolled away from the door of the sepulchre; and the Crucified came forth, the Conqueror of death and Hades. Then the Lamb overcame. Then He began His victorious progress as King of kings and Lord of lords. Then the power and the wisdom of the world were alike put to shame. Was not this enough? No, for now follow the words which come upon us in a way so wholly unexpected: *And the ten horns which thou sawest, and the beast, these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her utterly with fire.*

What is the meaning of these words? Surely not that Rome was to be attacked and overthrown by the barbaric hordes that burst upon her from the North: for, in the first place, the Roman manifestation of the world-power had passed away before the ten kings came to their kingdom; and, in the second place, when Rome fell, she fell as the beast, not as the harlot. Surely also not that a great world-city, concentrating in itself all the resources of the world-power, is to be hated and burned by its subjects, for we have already seen that this whole notion of a great world-city of the end is groundless; and the resources of the world-power are always in this book concentrated in the beast, and not in the harlot who directs their use. There seems only one method of explaining the words, but it is one in perfect consonance with the method and purpose of the Apocalypse as a whole. As on many other occasions, the fortunes of the Church of Christ are modelled upon the fortunes of her Master. With that Master the Church was one. He had always identified His people with Himself, in life and death,

in time and in eternity. Could the beloved disciple do otherwise? He looked round upon the suffering Church of his day. He was a "companion with it in the tribulation, and kingdom, and patience which are in Jesus."[1] He felt all its wounds and shared all its sorrows, just as he felt and shared the wounds and sorrows of that Lord who lived in him, and in whom he lived. Here, therefore, was the mould in which the fortunes of the Church appeared to him. He went back to well-remembered scenes in the life of Christ; and he beheld these repeating themselves, in principle at least, in the members of His Body.

Now there was one scene of the past—how well does he remember it, for he was present at the time!—when the Roman power and a degenerate Judaism, the beast and the harlot of the day, combined to make war upon the Lamb. For a moment they seemed to succeed, yet only for a moment. They nailed the Lamb to the cross; but the Lamb overcame them, and rose in triumph from the grave. But the Seer did not pause there. He looked a few more years onward, and what did he next behold? That wicked partnership was dissolved. These companions in crime had turned round upon one another. The harlot had counselled the beast, and the beast had given the harlot power, to execute the darkest deed which had stained the pages of human history. But the alliance did not last. The alienation of the two from each other, restrained for a little by co-operation in common crime, burst forth afresh, and deepened with each passing year, until it ended in the march of the Roman armies into Palestine, their investment of the

[1] Chap. i. 9.

Jewish capital, and that sack and burning of the city which still remain the most awful spectacle of bloodshed and of ruin that the world has seen. Even this is not all. St. John looks still further into the future, and the tragedy is repeated in the darker deeds of the last "hour." There will again be a "beast" in the brute power of the ten kings of the world, and a harlot in a degenerate Jerusalem, animating and controlling it. The two will again direct their united energies against the true Church of Christ, the "called, and chosen, and faithful." They may succeed; it will be only for a moment. Again the Lamb will overcome them; and in the hour of defeat the sinful league between them will be broken, and the world-power will hate the harlot, and make her desolate and naked, and eat her flesh, and burn her utterly with fire.

This is the prospect set before us in these words, and this the consolation of the Church under the trials that await her at the end of the age. "When the wicked spring as the grass, and all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever: but Thou, O Lord, art on high for evermore. For, lo, Thine enemies, O Lord, for, lo, Thine enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered."[1]

Babylon is fallen, not indeed in a strictly chronological narrative, for she will again be spoken of as if she still existed upon earth. But for the time her overthrow has been consummated, her destruction is complete, and all that is good can only rejoice at the spectacle of her fate. Hence the opening verses of the next chapter.

[1] Ps. xcii. 7-9.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FALL OF BABYLON.

Rev. xviii.

BABYLON has fallen. We have now the Divine proclamation of her fate, and the lamentation of the world over the doom to which she has been consigned:—

> After these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried with a mighty voice, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and is become a habitation of devils, and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird. For by the wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations are fallen, and the kings of the earth committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth waxed rich by the power of her wantonness (xviii. 1-3).

At chap. xvii. 1 we read of one of the angels that had the seven Bowls. The angel now introduced is *another*, or a second. We shall find as we proceed that we have entered upon a new series of seven parts, similar to that in chap. xiv., where six angels and their actions, three on either side, are grouped around One higher than angels, and forming the central figure of the movement.[1] The series is a long one, extending from chap. xvii. 1 to chap. xxii. 5, the central figure

[1] Kliefoth seems to have been the first to point this out.

meeting us at chap. xix. 11; and again, as before, the fact ought to be carefully noticed, for it has a bearing on the interpretation of some of the most difficult sections of this book. Meanwhile we have to do with the second angel, whose action extends to ver. 20 of the present chapter.

The description given of this angel is proportioned to the importance of his message. He has *great authority;* the earth is *lightened with his glory;* the voice with which he cries is *mighty.* It could hardly be otherwise than that, with such joyful tidings as he bears to men, the "glory of the Lord should shine round about him, and a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun."[1] The tidings themselves follow, taken from the Old Testament accounts of the desolation that was to come upon Babylon: "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall shepherds make their flocks to lie down there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and ostriches shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And wolves shall cry in their castles, and jackals in the pleasant palaces."[2] In words such as these, though combined throughout both the present and following descriptions with expressions taken from the ruin of other famous and guilty cities of the Old Testament, we have the source whence the powerful and pathetic words of this chapter are drawn. The most terrible

[1] Luke ii. 9; Acts xxvi. 13.

[2] Isa. xiii. 19-22.

disasters of bygone times are but types of that wreck of all the grandeur of earth which we are now invited to behold, while Babylon's sinfulness is referred to that her fate may appear to be no more than her appropriate punishment.

At this point we are met by one of those sudden transitions, common in the Apocalypse, which so completely negative the idea of chronological arrangement. A cry is heard which seems to imply that Babylon has not yet fallen :—

> And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come forth, My people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached even unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Render unto her even as she rendered, and double unto her the double according to her works: in the cup which she hath mingled mingle unto her double. How much soever she glorified herself, and waxed wanton, so much give her of torment and mourning: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall in no wise see mourning. Therefore in one day shall her plagues come, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God which judged her (xviii. 4-8).

The first words of this voice from heaven deserve peculiar attention: *Come forth, My people, out of her;* that is, out of Babylon, the degenerate Church. We are at once reminded of the striking teaching of our Lord in chap. x. of the fourth Gospel, where He compares Himself to the "door" of the fold, not the door by which the sheep enter into, but by which they come out of, the fold.[1] We are also reminded of the blind man of chap. ix. of the same Gospel, whom our Lord "found" only after he had been "cast out" of the synagogue.[2] In the midst of the blinded theocracy of Israel in the days of Jesus there was a faithful,

[1] John x. 7. [2] John ix. 35.

though small, remnant. It had been betrayed by the religious guides of the people, who had become "thieves and robbers," whom the true sheep did not know, and to whom they ought not to listen. Jesus came to call it out of the theocracy to Himself. Such was the spectacle which St. John had witnessed when his Master was in the world, and that experience is now repeated. The Church as a whole degenerates. Called to prepare men for the Second Coming of the Lord, and to teach them to live, not for the present, but the future, she becomes herself the victim of the present. She forgets that, in the absence of the Bridegroom, her days are days of fasting. She fails to realize the fact that until her Lord comes again her state is one of widowhood. And, instead of mourning, she sits as a queen, at ease and satisfied, proud of her pomp and jewellery. What is all this but a recurrence of the old events of history? The Apostle sees the future mirrored in the past; and he can only follow in his Master's footsteps, and call His Christian remnant out of Babylon.

The words are in the highest degree important for the interpretation and understanding of the Apocalypse. We have already found in more than one passage distinct traces of this double Church, of the true Church within the false, of the few living ones within the Body which had a name to live, but was dead. Here the distinction meets us in all its sharpness, and fresh light is cast upon passages that may have formerly seemed dark. "Many are called," "many" constituting the outward Church; but "few are chosen," "few" constituting the real Church, the Church which consists of the poor, and meek, and lowly. The two parts may keep together for a time, but the union cannot last;

and the day comes when, as Christ called His sheep out of the Jewish, so He will again call His sheep out of the Christian "fold," that they may hear His voice, and follow Him.

Having summoned the true disciples of Jesus out of Babylon, the voice from heaven again proclaims in a double form, as *sins* and as *iniquities*, the guilt of the doomed city, and invites the ministers of judgment, according to the *lex talionis*, to *render unto her double*. The command may also be founded upon the law of the theocracy by which thieves and violent aggressors of the poor were required to make a double repayment to those whom they had injured,[1] or it may rest upon the remembrance of such threatenings as those by the prophet Jeremiah, "I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double."[2]

Judgment is next supposed to have been executed upon Babylon; and the Seer proceeds to describe in language of unexampled eloquence the lamentation of the world over the city's fall:—

And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived wantonly with her, shall weep and wail over her, when they look upon the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Woe, woe, the great city Babylon, the strong city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stone, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and every vessel of ivory, and every vessel made of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and spice, and incense, and ointment, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and cattle, and sheep, and merchandise of horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. And the fruits which thy soul lusted after are gone from thee, and all things that were dainty and sumptuous are perished from thee, and

[1] Exod. xxii. 4, 7, 9. [2] Jer. xvi. 18.

men shall find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, who were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, she that was arrayed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stone, and pearl! for in one hour so great riches is made desolate. And every shipmaster, and every one that saileth anywhither, and mariners, and as many as gain their living by sea, stood afar off, and cried out as they looked upon the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like the great city? And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, wherein were made rich all that had their ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate. Rejoice with her, thou heaven, and ye saints, and ye apostles, and ye prophets; for God hath judged your judgment on her (xviii. 9-20).

Three classes of persons are introduced to us: Kings, Merchants, and Sailors. All are *of the earth;* and each class, in its own strain, swells the voice of lamentation. The words are largely taken from the Old Testament, and more particularly from the description of the overthrow of Tyre in Ezekiel (chaps. xxvi., xxvii.). There is even a peculiar propriety in this latter reference, for Tyre was known by the prophets as another Babylon. In describing the "Burden of Tyre," Isaiah uses in one part of his description the words, "The city of confusion" (the meaning of the word Babylon) "is broken down."[1]

It is unnecessary to enter into any examination clause by clause of the passage before us. We shall better catch its spirit and be made sensible of its effect by attending to a few general observations upon the description as a whole.

1. Not without interest may we mark that the classes selected to mourn over the burning of the city are three in number. We have thus another illustration of the

[1] Isa. xxiv. 10.

manner in which that number penetrates the structure of all the writings of St. John.

2. Emphasis is laid upon the fact that the city is *burned*. Her destruction by fire has indeed been more than once alluded to. Of the beast and the ten horns it had been said that "they shall burn her utterly with fire;"[1] and, again, it had been proclaimed by the voice from heaven that "she shall be utterly burned with fire."[2] We shall not venture to say with any measure of positiveness that the type of this "burning" is taken from the burning of Jerusalem by the Romans. It may have been taken from the burning of other cities by victorious enemies. But this much at least is obvious: that, in conjunction with the fact that Babylon is a harlot, destruction by fire leads us directly to the thought of the spiritual, and not simply the civil, or political, or commercial, character of the city. According to the law of Moses, burning appears to have been the punishment of fornication only in the case of a priest's daughter: "And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the harlot, she shall be burnt with fire."[3]

3. Whether there is any other allusion to spiritual traffic in the lamentations before us it is not easy to say. Of one at least which may be quoted in this connexion the interpretation is uncertain. When the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over the loss of that merchandise which they now miss, they extend it, not only to articles of commerce bought and sold in an ordinary market, but to *souls of men*. It may be that, as often suggested, slavery alone is thought of. Yet it is highly improbable that such is the case. Rather may

[1] Chap. xvii. 16. [2] Chap. xviii. 8 [3] Lev. xxi. 9.

it be supposed to refer to that spiritual life which is destroyed by too much occupation with, and too engrossing interest in, the world. "The characteristic of this *fornication* is the selling themselves for gold, as the Greek word signifies. Therefore with such wonderful force and emphasis of accumulation is every species of this merchandise mentioned, running up all into one head: *the souls of men.* Like that in the prophet: 'Their land is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land also is full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots; their land also is full of idols.' And it must be observed that all these things which are so minutely particularized as expressive of the meshes of that net by which men's souls are taken have also their place in the new Jerusalem, where every jewel is specified by name, and the gold of its streets, and the fine linen, and the incense, and the wine, and the oil, its white horses also. In both alike must they stand for spiritual merchandise of good and evil, the false riches and the true."[1]

The conclusion to be drawn is that Babylon is a spiritual city. That, as such, she is Jerusalem is further confirmed by the fact that, at the close of the chapter, it is said, *And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth.* Similar words met us in chap. xvii. 6; and here, as there, they unmistakeably remind us of the words already quoted in which our Lord describes the great city of the Jews.[2]

4. From all that has been said, it must be obvious that nothing is here spoken of Babylon inapplicable

[1] Isaac Williams, *The Apocalypse, with Notes*, etc., p. 360.
[2] Matt. xxiii. 35. Comp. p. 291.

to Jerusalem when we think of this latter city in the light in which the Seer specially regards it. Jerusalem was indeed neither a commercial nor a maritime city, but Rome also was no city on the sea. A large part, therefore, of the details of St. John's description is not less destitute of force when applied, if applied literally, to the latter than to the former. On the other hand, these details are more applicable to Jerusalem than to Rome, if we remember that Jerusalem supplies, in a way impossible to Rome, the groundwork for a delineation of those religious forces which are far more wide-spreading in their reach, and far more crushing in their power, than the legions of the imperial metropolis.

Babylon then is fallen, and that with a sudden and swift destruction, a destruction indeed so sudden and so swift that each of the three companies that lament takes particular notice of the fact that *in one hour* did her judgment come.[1]

More, however, so important is the subject, has to be said; and we are introduced to the action of the third angel of the first group:—

> And a strong angel took up a stone, as it were a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and minstrels, and flute-players, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft, shall be found any more at all in thee; and the voice of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for with thy sorcery were all the nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth (xviii. 21-24).

Yet once again, it would seem, must we think of

[1] Vers. 10, 17, 19.

Babylon as to be destroyed rather than as destroyed already. So great is her guiltiness that the Seer again and again approaches it, and dwells, though from different points of view, upon the thought of her disastrous fate. In the present case it is less the method than the effect of her destruction that is before his eye, and nothing can be more touching than the light in which he presents it. At one moment we behold the city in her brightness, her gaiety, her rich and varied life. We hear the voice of her harpers, and minstrels, and flute-players, and trumpeters, all that can delight the ear accompanying all that can please the eye. Her craftsmen of every craft are busy at their work; and each shop in the great city resounds with the noise of the hammer, or the shuttle, or the other instruments of prosperous industry. The cheering sound of the millstone tells that there is food in her humbler dwellings. Her merchants, too, are the princes of the earth; innumerable lamps glitter in their halls and gardens; and the voice of the bridegroom and the bride is the pledge of her well-being and joy. The next moment the proud city is cast like a millstone into the sea; and all is silence, desolation, and ruin. The resources of language appear as if they had been exhausted to supply the description of so great a fall.

We have now reached the close of the longest and most important section of the Apocalypse, beginning, as has been already pointed out, with chap. vi. It is the fourth in that series of seven of which the book is composed; and the main purpose of St. John in writing finds expression in it. As the writer of the fourth Gospel describes in the fourth section of that book,

extending from chap. v. to chap. xii., the conflict between the Son of God and "the Jews," so he describes in the corresponding section of the Apocalypse the conflict between the glorified Son of man as He lives and reigns in His Church and the evil of the world. Throughout the conflict we are not once permitted to forget that, although Christ and the true members of His Body may be the objects of attack, and may even have to retire for security from the field, God is on their side, and will never suffer His faithfulness to fail or forget His promises. In a threefold series of judgments the guilty world and the guilty Church are visited with the terrors of His wrath. These three series of judgments, too, go on in an ascending line. The climactic character of their contents has already been pointed out, and nothing more need be said of it. But it may be worth while to notice that the element of climax appears not less in the nature of the instruments employed. Comparing the Trumpets with the Seals, the simple fact that they are Trumpets indicates a higher, more exciting, more terrible unfolding of wrath. The Trumpet is peculiarly the warlike instrument, summoning the hosts to battle: "Thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war;" "That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities."[1] That the Bowls, again, are still more potent than the Trumpets, appears from the language in which they are described, from their mode of introduction, and from the vessels made use of for the

[1] Jer. iv. 19; Zeph. i. 15, 16.

plagues. They are "the last" plagues; in them is "finished" the wrath of God; they are called for by a "great voice out of the sanctuary;" and they proceed, not from a secular instrument, however warlike, but from a sacred vessel, not from one which must be sounded for a length of time before it produces its effect, but from one which, inverted in a moment, pours out with a sudden gush its terrors upon men. Similar though they thus are, the three series of judgments lose what might otherwise be their sameness; and the mind is invited to rest upon that most instructive lesson of the providence of God, that in proportion to privilege misused is the severity with which sin is punished. Throughout all these judgments the righteous are kept safe.

It will thus be observed that there is no strict chronological succession in the visions of this book. There is succession of a certain kind, succession in intensity of punishment. But we cannot assign one series of judgments to one period in the history of the Church or limit another to another. All the three series may continually fulfil themselves wherever persons are found of the character and disposition to which they severally apply.

But while these three series constitute the chief substance of the fourth, or leading, section of the seven into which the Apocalypse is divided, they do not exhaust the subject. The last series, in particular—that of the Bowls—has proceeded upon a supposition the most startling and pathetic by which the history of the Church is marked,—that "they are not all Israel which are of Israel," that tares have mingled with the wheat, and that the spirit of Babylon has found its way into the heart of the city of God. A pheno-

menon so unexpected and so melancholy stands in need of particular examination, and that examination is given in the description of the character and fate of Babylon. The remarks already made upon this point need not be repeated. It may be enough to remind the reader that in no part of his whole book is the Seer more deeply moved, and that in none does he rise to strains of more powerful and touching eloquence. Yet what is chiefly required of us is to open our minds to the full impression of the fact that Babylon does fall, deep in ruin as in guilt, and that with her fall the conflict ends.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PAUSE OF VICTORY AND JUDGMENT OF THE BEAST AND THE FALSE PROPHET.

Rev. xix.

THOSE who have followed with attention the course of this commentary can hardly fail to have observed its leading conception of the book with which it deals. That conception is that the Revelation of St. John presents to us in visions the history of the Church moulded upon the history of her Lord whilst He tabernacled among men. It is the invariable lesson of the New Testament that Christ and His people are one. He is the Vine; they are the branches. He is in them; they are in Him. With equal uniformity the sacred writers teach us that just as Christ suffered during the course of His earthly ministry, so also His people suffer. They have to endure the struggle before they enjoy the victory, and to bear the cross before they win the crown. But the peculiarity of the Apocalypse is, that it carries out this thought much more fully than the other New Testament books. St. John does not merely see the Church suffer. He sees her suffer in a way precisely as her Lord did. He lives in the thought of those words spoken by Jesus to Salome at a striking moment of his life with regard to his brother and himself, "The cup that I drink ye shall drink;

and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized."[1] That very cup is put into his hands and into the hands of his brethren, who are "partakers with him in the tribulation, and kingdom, and patience which are in Jesus;"[2] with that very baptism they are all baptized.

Now we know from the fourth Gospel what the light was in which St. John looked back, at a distance of more than half a century, upon the life of Jesus. Nothing therefore was more natural than that, dealing only with the great principles at work in God's government of the world and guidance of His Church, and seeing these principles embodied in visions, the visions should present to him a course of things precisely similar to that which had been followed in the case of the Forerunner of the Church and the Captain of her salvation.

Turning then to the fourth Gospel, it has long been acknowledged by every inquirer of importance that the struggle of Jesus with the world, which the Evangelist chiefly intends to relate, ends with the close of chap. xii. It is equally undeniable that with the beginning of chap. xviii. the struggle breaks out afresh. Between these two points lie chaps. xiii. to xvii., five chapters altogether different from those that either precede or follow them, marked by a different tone, and centring around that institution of the Last Supper in which, Judas having now "gone out," the love of Jesus to His disciples is poured forth with a tenderness previously unexampled. In these chapters we have first a narrative in which the love of Jesus is related as it appears in the foot-washing and in the institution

[1] Mark x. 39. [2] Rev. i. 9.

of the Supper, and then, immediately afterwards, a pause. This pause—chaps. xiii. 31-xvii.—together with the narrative preceding it, occurs at the close of a struggle substantially finished—"I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do"[1]—and only yet again to burst forth in one final and unsuccessful effort against the Prince of life.

It would seem as if we had a similar structure at the point of the Apocalypse now reached by us. There is a transition narrative which, so far as the thought in it is concerned, may be regarded either as closing the fourth or as beginning the fifth section of the book. It is probably better to understand it as the latter, because the mould of the Gospel is thus better preserved; and, where so much else speaks distinctly of that mould, there is no impropriety in giving the benefit of a doubt to what is otherwise sufficiently established. Although therefore the fifth section of the Apocalypse, the Pause, begins properly with ver. 11 of the present chapter, the first ten verses may be taken along with these as a preparatory narrative standing to what follows as John xiii. 1-30 stands to chap. xiii. 31-chap. xvii. The probability, too, that this is the light in which we are to look at the passage before us, is rendered greater when we notice, first, that there is in the midst of the preliminary narrative, and for the first time mention made of a "supper," the marriage supper of the Lamb,[2] and, secondly, that at a later point in the book there is a final outburst of evil against the Church, which, notwithstanding the powerful forces ranged against her, is unsuccessful.[3]

[1] John xvii. 4. [2] Ver. 9. [3] Chap. xx. 7.

What we have *now* to do with is thus not a continuation of the struggle. It is a pause in which the fall of Babylon is celebrated, and the great enemies of the Church are consigned to their merited fate :—

After these things I heard as it were a great voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah; Salvation, and glory, and power, belong to our God: for true and righteous are His judgments: for He hath judged the great harlot, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and He hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand. And a second time they say, Hallelujah. And her smoke goeth up for ever and ever. And the four-and-twenty elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God that sitteth on the throne, saying, Amen; Hallelujah. And a voice came forth from the throne, saying, Give praise to our God, all ye His servants, ye that fear Him, the small and the great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth. Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And it was given unto her that she should clothe herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are bidden unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are true words of God. And I fell down before his feet to worship him. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (xix. 1-10).

Babylon has fallen; and the world, represented by three classes of its inhabitants—kings, merchants, and sailors—has poured out its lamentations over her fall. Very different are the feelings of the good, and these feelings appear in the narrative before us. *A great multitude* is heard *in heaven*, not necessarily in the region beyond the grave, but in that of the righteous, of the unworldly, of the spiritual, whether in time or in eternity. This "multitude" is probably to be identified with that of chap. vii. 9. The definite article, which

would render the identification complete, is indeed wanting; but we have already found instances of the same method of speech with regard to the one hundred and forty and four thousand of chap. xiv. 1, and with regard to the glassy sea of chap. xv. 2. The whole ransomed Church of God is therefore included in the expression. They sing first; and the burden of their song is *Hallelujah*, or Praise to God, because He has inflicted upon the harlot the due punishment of her sins and crimes. Nor do they sing only once; they sing the same ascription of praise *a second time*. The meaning is not simply that they do this twice, the "second time" having more than its numerical force, and being designed to bring out the intensity of their feelings and their song.[1] Then the four-and-twenty elders, the representatives of the glorified Church, and the four living creatures, the representatives of redeemed creation, answer, *Amen*, and take up the same song: *Hallelujah*. All creation, animate and inanimate, swells the voice of joy and praise.

Meanwhile the *smoke of the harlot's torment goeth up for ever and ever*. Again, as once before,[2] we have here no right to fasten our thoughts upon immortal spirits of men deceived and led astray. Such may be included. If they have identified themselves with the harlot, we need not hesitate to say that they are included. But what is mainly brought under our notice is the overthrow, complete and final, of sin itself. Babylon has been utterly overthrown, and her punishment shall never be forgotten. Her fate shall remain a monument of the righteous judgment of God, and shall illustrate unto the ages of the ages the character of Him who,

[1] Comp.

[2] Comp. p. 250.

for creation's sake, will "by no means clear the guilty."[1]

A voice from heaven is then heard calling upon all the servants of God to praise Him; and this is followed by another voice, *as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth.* He always indeed really reigned, but now He has taken to Himself His great power, and everything acknowledges its King.

Thus a new moment is reached in the history of God's saints. The Lamb is come to claim His bride, and *His wife hath made herself ready.* She has been long betrothed, and has been waiting for the Bridegroom. Through storm and calm, through sorrow and joy, through darkness and light, she has waited for Him, crying ever and again, "Come quickly." At last He comes, and the marriage and the marriage supper are to take place. For the first time in the Apocalypse we read of this marriage, and for the first time, although the general idea of supping with the Lord had been once alluded to,[2] of this marriage supper. The figure indeed is far from being new. The writers both of the Old and of the New Testament use it with remarkable frequency.[3] But no sacred writer appears to have felt more the power and beauty of the similitude than St. John. In the first miracle which he records, and in which he sees the whole glory of the New Testament dispensation mirrored forth, He who changed the water into wine is the Bridegroom of His

[1] Exod. xxxiv. 7.

[2] Comp. chap. iii. 20.

[3] Comp. Ps. xlv. 9-15; Isa. liv. 5; Hos. ii. 19; Matt. xxii. 2; Eph. v. 32, etc.

Church[1]; and, when the Baptist passes out of view in the presence of Him for whom he had prepared the way, he records the swan-like song in which the great prophet terminated his mission in order that another and a higher than himself might have sole possession of the field: "Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled."[2]

Such is the moment that has now arrived, and the bride is ready for it. Her raiment is worthy of our notice. It is *fine linen, bright and pure;* and then it is immediately added, *for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.* These acts are not the imputed righteousness of Christ, although only in Christ are the acts performed. They express the moral and religious condition of those who constitute the bride. No outward righteousness alone, with which we might be clothed as with a garment, is a sufficient preparation for future blessedness. An inward change is not less necessary, a personal and spiritual meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. Christ must not only be on us as a robe, but in us as a life, if we are to have the hope of glory.[3] Let us not be afraid of words like these. Rightly viewed, they in no way interfere with our completeness in the Beloved alone, or with the fact that not by works of righteousness that we have done, but by grace, are we saved through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God.[4] All our salvation is

[1] John ii. 1-11.
[2] John iii. 28, 29.
[3] Col. i. 27.
[4] Eph ii. 8.

of Christ, but the change upon us must be internal as well as external. The elect are foreordained to be conformed to the image of God's Son[1]; and the Christian condition is expressed in the words which say, not only "Ye were justified," but also "ye were washed, ye were sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God."[2]

Thus "made ready," the bride now enters with the Bridegroom into the marriage feast; and, as the whole of her future rises before the view of the heavenly visitant who converses with the Seer, he says to him, *Write, Blessed are they which are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb.*

Once before St. John had heard a similar, perhaps the same, voice from heaven, saying, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth."[3] Then we believed; now we see. The clouds are dispelled; the veil is rent asunder; we enter into the palace of the great King. There is music, and festivity, and joy. There is neither sin nor sorrow, no privilege abused, no cloud upon any countenance, no burden upon any heart, no shadow from the future to darken the rapture of the present. Here is life, and life abundantly; the peace that passeth understanding; the joy unspeakable and glorified; the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading.

In particular, when we think of this marriage supper of the Lamb, we cannot but return to that supper in the upper chamber of Jerusalem which occupies so strikingly similar a position in the life of Jesus. There Jesus said, "Take, eat: this is My body, which is for you;" "This cup is the new covenant in My blood:

[1] Rom. viii. 29. [2] 1 Cor. vi. 11. [3] Chap. xiv. 13.

drink ye all of it."[1] That was a feast, in which He gave Himself to be for ever the nourishment of His Church. And in like manner in the marriage supper of the Lamb the Lord who became dead and is alive for evermore is not only the Bridegroom, but the substance of the feast. In Him and by Him His people lived on earth; in Him and by Him they live for ever.

All this St. John saw. All this, too, he heard confirmed by the statement that, wonderful and glorious as was the spectacle, it was yet *true words of God.* He was overwhelmed, and would have worshipped his angelic visitant. But he was interrupted by the declaration on the angel's part, *See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus: worship God.* These fellow-servants are first the prophets, but then also all true members of Christ's Body. The last not less than the first hold the testimony of Jesus[2]; and because they do so, they too are prophets, for prophecy, whether in Old or in New Testament times, testifies to Him. In Him all revelation centres. He is the expression of the God whom no man hath seen. He is thus the Alpha and the Omega, "over all, God blessed for ever."[3]

By so contemplating Him we are prepared for the next following vision:—

And I saw the heavens opened, and behold a white horse, and He that sat thereon, called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He hath a name written, which no man knoweth, but He Himself. And He is arrayed in a

[1] Matt. xxvi. 26, 27; 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25.
[2] Comp. chaps. i. 3, 9, vi. 9, xi. 7, xii. 17, xx. 4.
[3] Rom. ix. 5.

garment sprinkled with blood: and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure. And out of His mouth proceedeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His garment and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS (xix. 11-16).

Of the position of this passage in the structure of the Apocalypse we have already spoken; and, looked at in that its true light, it may be called the Pause of Victory. There is no renewal of the struggle. A Warrior is indeed presented to us; but He is a Warrior who has already conquered, and who comes forth not so much to subdue His enemies as to inflict upon them their final punishment.

Heaven is *open*, and our attention is first of all directed to a rider *upon a white horse.* The description given of this rider leaves no doubt as to who He is. The "whiteness" of the horse is the emblem of a purity that can be connected with the kingdom of God alone. The description of the Rider—*Faithful*, who will not suffer one word that He has promised to fail; *True*, not true as opposed to false, but real as opposed to shadowy—corresponds only to something essentially Divine; while the particulars of His appearance afterwards mentioned take us back to the glorified Son of man of chap. i., and to other passages of this and other books of the Bible which speak of the same glorious Person. There are *the eyes* like *a flame of fire* of chap. i. 14 and chap. ii. 18. There are *upon His head many diadems*, a fact not previously mentioned, but corresponding to the many royalties which belong to Him whom all things obey. There is the *name which none but He Himself knoweth*, for "no one knoweth

the Son save the Father."[1] There is the *garment sprinkled with blood*, of which we read in the prophet Isaiah,[2] the blood, not that of the Conqueror shed for us, but the blood of His enemies staining His raiment as He returns victorious from the field. There is the name *The Word of God*, with which St. John alone has made us familiar in the opening of his Gospel. There are *the armies which are in heaven, following Him upon white horses*, and *clothed in fine linen, white and pure*, to which our attention is directed, not for their sake, but for His, for He has made them partakers of His victory. There is the *sharp sword proceeding out of His mouth* of chap. i. 16 and chap. ii. 12. There is the *smiting of the nations*, of which we have already heard in chap. ii. 27 and chap. xii. 5. There is the *treading of the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God*, spoken of in chap. xiv. 19, 20. Finally, there is *on His garment and on His thigh the name* KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. All these traits leave no doubt who this Captain of salvation is; and all are noted that we may better understand both the glory of His person, and the nature of His accomplished work.

One thing therefore alone remains: that the great adversaries of His people shall be consigned to their doom; and to this the Seer proceeds:—

And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid-heaven, Come and be gathered together unto the great supper of God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit thereon, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, and small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered

[1] Matt. xi. 27. [2] Isa. lxiii. 3.

together to make war against Him that sat upon the horse, and against His army. And the beast was taken, and he that was with him, the false prophet that wrought the signs in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. They twain were cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, even the sword which came forth out of His mouth: and all the birds were filled with their flesh (xix. 17-21).

The angel beheld at the beginning of this scene is the first of the three forming the second group of that series of seven parts of which the triumphing Conqueror was the centre. He stood *in the sun*, which is to be thought of as in the zenith of its daily path, in order that he may be seen and heard by all. It is to *the birds that fly in mid-heaven* that he calls; that is, to those strong and fierce birds of prey, such as the eagle and the vulture, which fly in the highest regions of the atmosphere. His cry is that they shall come to the great supper of God, that they may feast upon the flesh of all the enemies of the Lamb. The idea of such a feast is found in the prophecies of Ezekiel; and there can be no doubt, from the many accompanying circumstances of similarity between the description of it there and here, that St. John has the language of the prophet in his eye: "And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord God; Speak unto the birds of every sort, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to My sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full,

and drink blood till ye be drunken, of My sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. And ye shall be filled at My table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord God."[1] Yet, while the picture of the prophet is unquestionably before the Seer's mind, it is impossible to doubt that we have in this supper a travesty of that marriage supper of the Lamb which had been spoken of in the previous part of the chapter.[2] In contrast with the joyful banquet at which the children of God shall be nourished by Him whose flesh is meat indeed and whose blood is drink indeed, the wicked, to whatever rank or station they belong, shall themselves be a meal for all foul and ravenous birds. The whole passage reminds us of the spectacle at Calvary, as it is set before us in the fourth Gospel, and may be accepted as one of the innumerable proofs of the similarity between two books—that Gospel and the Apocalypse—at first sight so different from each other. On the Cross Jesus is the true Paschal Lamb, not so much in the moment of its death as at a subsequent stage, when it was prepared for, and eaten at, the paschal meal. In the conduct of the Jews on that occasion St. John appears to behold an inverted and contorted Passover. The enemies of Jesus had not entered into the judgment-hall of Pilate, "lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover."[3] They had not eaten it then Amidst the tumult and stormy passions of that dreadful morning, when had they an opportunity of eating it? St. John does not tell us that they found one. Rather is the whole narrative so constructed, so full of close, rapid, passionate action, that it is impossible

[1] Ezek. xxxix. 17-20. [2] Ver. 9. [3] John xviii. 28.

to fix upon any point at which we can insert their eating until it was too late to make it legal. May it not be that they found no opportunity for eating it? They lost their passover. Lost it? Nay; the Evangelist seems to say, they found a passover. Go with me to the Cross; mark there their cruel mockeries of the Lamb of God; and you shall see the righteous dealings of the Almighty as He makes these mockeries take the shape of a passover of judgment, a passover of added sin and deepened shame.[1]

The punishment of the wicked, and especially of the three great enemies of the Church, now proceeds; and it ought still to be carefully observed that we have to do with punishment, not war or overthrow in war. It was so at ver. 17, where, after the triumphing Conqueror had ridden forth, followed by His armies, there is no mention of any battle. There is only the angel's cry to the birds to gather themselves together unto the great supper of God. The battle had been already fought, and the victory already won. We are now told indeed of the gathering together of the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies, *to make war against Him that sat upon the horse, and against His army.* But, whatever may have been their design, it is not executed. No actual fighting is spoken of. The enemies referred to are at once taken, apparently without fighting, and are consigned to the fate which they have brought upon themselves.

Two of the three great enemies of the Lord and of His Church meet this fate,—*the beast* and *the false prophet.* The first of these is the beast so frequently

[1] The writer has endeavoured to unfold this view of Jesus on the Cross in two papers in *The Expositor*, first series, vol. vi., pp. 17, 129.

mentioned in previous chapters. More particularly it is the beast of chap. xvii., the representative of the antichristian world in its last and highest form. The second is not less certainly the second beast of chap. xiii., of whom it is said that "he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell upon the earth, that they should make an image to the beast."[1] The "signs," the "deception," and the "worship" of the beast now spoken of can be no other than those thus referred to.

One point may be noticed further. According to what seems to be the best reading of the original Greek, we are told here, not that "the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet," but "the beast was taken, and he that was with him, the false prophet." In other words, the language of St. John is designed to bring out the closeness of connexion between these two beasts, the fact that the one is always dependent on the other. They are never separated. The first cannot act without the second. Hence in all probability the reason why, in treating of the doom by which these enemies of the Church are overtaken, a separate paragraph is not assigned to each. They are taken together.

A more important question has been raised in connexion with the words before us; and it has been urged that they conclusively prove that both the beast and the false prophet are persons, not personifications.[2] We have already seen that in regard to the "beast" that conclusion is hasty.[3] It appears to be not less so in regard to the "false prophet." The simple fact

[1] Chap. xiii. 14. [2] Burger *in loc.* [3] Comp. p. 297.

that he deceiveth *them*—that is, all *that had received the mark of the beast*—is inconsistent with such an idea, unless we ascribe to him a ubiquity that is Divine; or unless we suppose, what Scripture gives us no warrant for believing, that there is in the realm of evil a personal trinity—the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet—corresponding to the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is much more natural to think that St. John's statements upon this point spring from that general method of conception which distinguishes him, and by which everything existing in the realm of good is thought of as having its counterpart in the realm of evil. The question thus raised is wholly independent of any consideration of the fate by which the two beasts are overtaken. When principles are viewed as persons, they must be spoken of as persons; and it will surely not be urged that death and Hades are persons because it is said of them, in chap. xx. 14, that they "were cast into the lake of fire."

The beast and the false prophet then are cast together into *the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone;* and this lake of fire is further explained in chap. xx. 14 to be "the second death." It is impossible to avoid the questions, How are we to conceive of this "lake of fire"? and, What is its effect? Yet, so far as at present concerns us, the answer to these questions must be taken from St. John alone. In the first instance at least we have nothing to do with the *general* teaching of Scripture on what is called the doctrine of "eternal punishment." Our only inquiry must be, What impression is the language employed by the Seer in these visions intended to convey? Upon this point it would seem as if there can be little doubt. To St. John it is no matter of consequence to tell us what

shall be the condition of the enemies of the Church throughout the ages of the future, or whether they shall be preserved everlastingly alive in torment and misery and woe. His one aim is to deal with the condition of the kingdom of God while it contends with its foes in this present scene. His one object is to tell us that these foes shall be destroyed for ever, and that the world shall be wholly purged from them. No further information is required to comfort us. We may leave them in the hands of God.

Looking at the matter in this light, we do not need to ask whether by "the lake of fire" we are to understand a lake in which the wicked are consumed or one in which they are upheld in undying flames. Either interpretation is consistent with the Apostle's course of thought, and with the impression which he wishes to produce.

No doubt it may be said that the principle of contrast, of which we have so often availed ourselves in interpreting this book, implies that, as the righteous shall be upheld amidst the joys of everlasting life, so the wicked shall be upheld amidst the torments of everlasting death. But it is precisely here that the peculiarity of St. John's mode of thought comes in. To him "life" is in the very nature of the case everlasting. Were it not so, it would not be life. Only therefore in so far as the conception of everlasting torment lies in the idea of "death" can it be truly said that the principle of contrast, so deeply rooted in St. John's mode of thought, demands the application of everlasting torment to the wicked. But the idea of torment everlastingly continued does not lie in the idea of "death." Death is privation; when inflicted by fire, capacity for torment is speedily destroyed; and death itself is cast

into the lake of fire. The natural conclusion is that the idea of torment belongs to the mode by which the death spoken of is inflicted—fire—and that the words with which we are dealing may mean no more than this,—that the eternity of effect following the overthrow of the beast and the false prophet is the leading conception associated with the "fire that burneth with brimstone" to which these great enemies of God's people are consigned.

If what has been said be correct, the whole question of the everlasting *suffering* of the wicked is left open so far as these passages in the Apocalypse are concerned; and St. John's main lesson is that when the beast and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire they shall no longer have power to war against the righteous or to disturb their peace.

When these two enemies of the Church had thus been destroyed, *the rest were killed with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, even the sword which came forth out of His mouth.* The persons thus called "the rest" are those who stand to the beast and the false prophet in the same relation as that in which "the rest of the woman's seed," spoken of in chap. xii. 17, stand to the man-child "caught up unto God and unto His throne." The man-child exalted and glorified is the same as "He that sat upon the horse," and in that condition a sword proceedeth out of His mouth.[1] The Guardian and Protector of His own, who has kept their true life safe amidst all outward troubles, brings also these troubles to an end. Their enemies are "killed." They are not yet cast into the lake of fire, because their hour of judgment has not come. By-and-by it will

[1] Chaps. i. 16; xix. 15.

come.[1] Meanwhile not only can they harm the righteous no more, but they afford a supper to the ravenous birds already spoken of; and the birds are more than satisfied: they are gorged with the unholy banquet. *All the birds were filled with their flesh.*

[1] Chap. xx. 15.

CHAPTER XVI.

JUDGMENT OF SATAN AND OF THE WICKED.

Rev. xx.

IN now approaching chap. xx., with its yet unsolved difficulties of interpretation, it is of essential importance to observe, in the first place, the relation of the chapter to what immediately precedes. The Seer is not entering upon an entirely new subject. He distinctly continues, on the contrary, the prosecution of a theme he had before begun. In the previous portion of his book three great enemies of the saints of God had been introduced to us,—the dragon or the devil, the beast, and the false prophet. These were the main opponents of the Lamb, in one way or another stirring up all the efforts that had been made against Him by the kings of the earth, their armies, and their followers. For a time they had appeared to succeed. They had persecuted the saints, had compelled them to flee, had overcome them, and killed them. This, however, could not continue; and it was to be shown that the final triumph remains with those who have suffered for the sake of righteousness. In chap. xix. we have the beginning, but not the close, of this triumph. Of the three great enemies only two—the beast and the false prophet—perish in that chapter. The destruction of

the third is reserved for chap. xx., and is effected at the tenth verse of the chapter. The verses following then describe the judgment of those who had listened to these enemies, but who, though defeated, or even killed,[1] or devoured by fire out of heaven when in their service,[2] had not yet been consigned to their doom. Thereafter nothing remains, in order to complete the triumph of Christ and His saints, but that death and Hades shall also be removed from the scene and cast into the lake of fire.

These considerations are of themselves sufficient to show that *the overthrow of Satan*, and not the reign of a thousand years, is the main theme of the first ten verses of the chapter. So far is the latter from being the culminating point of the whole book, that it is not even introduced at the beginning of any new and important section. It starts no new series of visions. It comes in in the midst of a section devoted to an entirely different matter :—

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished: after this he must be loosed for a little time. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: over these the second death hath no authority, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him

[1] Chap. xix. 21. [2] Chap. xx. 9.

a thousand years. And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall come forth to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up over the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever (xx. 1-10).

It is impossible within the limits of a commentary such as the present to discuss the different interpretations that have been given to a passage so difficult and so much controverted as the above. Nothing more can be attempted than to state briefly what seems to be the true meaning of the sacred writer, together with the grounds upon which the interpretation to be suggested rests.

The fundamental principle of that interpretation, to be kept clearly and resolutely in view, is this: that *the thousand years* mentioned in the passage express no period of time. They are not a figure for the whole Christian era, now extending to nearly nineteen hundred years. Nor do they denote a certain space of time, longer or shorter, it may be, than the definite number of years spoken of, at the close of the present dispensation, and to be in the view of some preceded, in the view of others followed, by the second Advent of our Lord. They embody an idea; and that idea, whether applied to the subjugation of Satan or to the triumph of the saints, is the idea of completeness or perfection. Satan is bound for a thousand years; that is, he is completely bound. The saints reign for a thousand years; that is, they are introduced into a state of perfect and glorious victory. Before endeavouring to

bring out this thought more fully, several preliminary considerations may be noticed.

1. Years may be understood in this sense. In Ezek. xxxix. 9 it is said that the inhabitants of the cities of Israel shall prevail against the enemies described, and "shall go forth, and shall make fires of the weapons and burn them, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the hand-staves, and the spears, and they shall make fires of them seven years." No one can suppose that the "seven years" here spoken of are to be literally understood, or even that the length of time which would be needed to burn the weapons is the thought upon which the prophet dwells. His meaning, in correspondence with the use of the number seven, can only be that these weapons shall be destroyed with a great and complete destruction. Again, in the same chapter, at ver. 12, after the defeat of "Gog and all his multitude," it is said, "And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land." A literal interpretation is here not less impossible than in the case of the burning of the weapons; nor can the meaning be exhausted by the thought that a long time would be necessary for the burying. The number "seven" must have its due force assigned to it, and the prophet can only mean that the land should be thoroughly cleansed from heathen impurity. The use of the term "years" in the vision before us seems to be exactly similar; and the probability that it is so rises almost to certainty when we observe that, as proved by the vision of Gog and Magog in the subsequent part of the chapter, the prophecy of Ezekiel is before the Seer's eye, and that it constitutes the foundation upon which his whole delineation rests.

The only difficulty connected with this view is that in the third verse of the chapter Satan is said to have been shut into the abyss *until the thousand years should be finished*, and that in the seventh verse we read, *And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed*. But the difficulty is more specious than real. Let us familiarise ourselves with the thought that the thousand years may simply express completeness, thoroughness, either of defeat or victory; let us remember that the Seer had represented the defeat of Satan by the figure of being bound for a thousand years; finally, let us notice, as we have yet to see more fully, that Satan, although deprived of power over the righteous, is still to be the deceiver and ruler of the wicked: and it immediately follows that this latter thought could find no more appropriate form than in the statement that the deception took place, not "until," or "after," the thousand years should be finished. This is simply the carrying out of the symbolism already employed. To revert for a moment to the symbolism of Ezekiel, let us suppose that, after the prophet had described the burning of the weapons for "seven years," he had wished to mention also some other step by which the burning was to be followed. What more suitable words could he have used than that it took place either "after this," or "after the seven years were finished"? In point of fact, this is exactly what the prophet does. He has occasion to refer to further efforts made to secure the purity of the land; and the words employed by him are, "*After the end of seven months* shall they search."[1] The one expression is no more than the natural consequence of the other.

[1] Ezek. xxxix. 14.

2. What is the meaning of the last words of the third verse of the chapter,—*He* (*i.e.*, Satan) *must be loosed for a little time?* What is this "little time"? The words take us directly to that conception of the *Christian age* which is so intimately interwoven with the structure of the Apocalypse, and even of the whole New Testament,—that it is all "a little time." This is particularly apparent in the application of the very same words to the souls under the altar in chap. vi. 11: "And it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, which should be killed even as they were, should be fulfilled." The "little time" there is undeniably that extending from the moment of the vision to the close of the present dispensation. But, if it be so there, we are entitled to suppose that the very same expression, when used in the passage before us, will be used in the same sense; and that, when it is said Satan shall be loosed "for a little time," the meaning is that he shall be loosed for the whole Christian age. Again, in chap. xii. 12 we read, "The devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time." The "short time" here referred to begins with the casting down of the devil out of heaven into the earth spoken of in the ninth verse of the same chapter. It must therefore include the whole period of his action in this world; and the manner in which that period is designated corresponds closely with the description of the time during which he is said, in chap. xx., to be loosed. Again, in chap. x. 6 the angel swears that there shall be "time" no longer, using the same word for time that we meet with in the verse now under consideration; so that it would appear as if to the author of

the Apocalypse the word "time" were a kind of technical term by which he was accustomed to denote the period of the Church's probation in this world. Lastly, this conclusion is powerfully confirmed by the many passages of the Apocalypse in which it is clear that the Christian dispensation, from its beginning to its end, is looked upon as a "very little while," as hastening to its final issue, and as about to be closed by One who cometh quickly.[1] The "little time" therefore, of the present chapter during which Satan is loosed, and which, when more fully dwelt upon, is the time of the war spoken of in vers. 7-9, is the historical period of the Christian dispensation, during which Satan is permitted to deceive the nations and to lead them against the camp of the saints and the beloved city. It is, in short, the time between the first and second coming of our Lord. The period so often sought in the thousand years of ver. 2 is really to be found in the "little time" of ver. 3.

3. Attention ought to be particularly directed to the condition of the saints during the thousand years spoken of. It is described in general terms as a *first resurrection.* Certain words of our Lord in the Gospel of St. John throw important light upon the meaning of this expression: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that have heard shall live,"[2] and, again, a little later in the same discourse, "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth."[3] Let us compare these two

[1] Chaps. i. 3, ii. 16, iii. 20, xxii. 20, etc.; 1 Cor. vii. 29; Heb. x. 37

[2] John v. 25.

[3] John v. 28.

verses with one another, and the presence of the clause "and now is" in the first, taken along with its omission in the second, leaves no doubt as to the principle on which they are to be interpreted. The first refers to a spiritual, the second to a bodily, resurrection. Here then in the words of our Lord Himself we have the source whence the idea of the "first resurrection" of the Apocalypse is derived. It is not an actual resurrection from the grave, although that resurrection is potentially involved in it. It is a spiritual resurrection in an hour "that now is;" and the fact that this is St. John's meaning is brought out still more clearly by the intimation that what he saw was *souls*, whose resurrection bodies had not yet been given them.[1]

The condition of the saints thought of in this vision is described, however, not only generally, but in various particulars, all of which, it will be seen, correspond with the apocalyptic idea of it even in a present world. *And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them.* But we have been already told that "they reign over the earth."[2] *Judgment was given unto them*, words which seem best understood in the sense, so peculiar to St. John, that for believers there is in the ordinary sense of the term no judgment. As they have passed through death, so also they have passed through judgment.[3] *They lived with Christ.* But Christ Himself had said in the Gospel, "Because I live, and ye shall live."[4] *They reigned with Christ.* But that is only another method of saying that they sat on thrones, with the added

[1] Comp. chap. vi. 9.
[2] Chap. v. 10.
[3] Comp. the teaching of our Lord in John xi. 25, 26, and v. 24.
[4] John xiv. 19 (margin of R.V.).

conception, so often associated with the word in the Apocalypse, that their enemies were bruised beneath their feet. *Over these the second death hath no authority.* But we have before been told of "him that overcometh" that "he shall not be hurt of the second death."[1] Finally, *they shall be priests of God and of Christ.* But it is needless to dwell upon the fact that from the opening of this book such has always been spoken of as the position of believers.

Nothing, in short, is said of the saints of God in this picture of millennial bliss that does not find a parallel in what the Seer has elsewhere written of their present life. On not a few different occasions their ideal condition in this world is set forth in as glowing terms as is their thousand years' glory and joy.

One expression may indeed startle us. What the Seer beheld is said to have been *the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God.* Is the word "beheaded" to be literally understood? Then a very small number of martyrs can be thought of. The great majority of those who have died for the faith of Jesus have been martyred in other and more dreadful ways. The word is the counterpart of "slaughtered" in the vision of the souls under the altar.[2] These were the saints of the Old Testament, whose death is described by a term characteristic to the Jewish mind of the mode in which offerings were presented to God. When the Seer passes to the thought of the great Gentile Church, he uses a term more appropriate to the Gentile method of terminating human life. "Beheaded" therefore expresses the same thing as "slaughtered." Both words

[1] Chap. ii. 11. [2] Chap. vi. 9.

refer to martyrdom; and both include all faithful ones in the dispensations to which they respectively belong, for in the eyes of St. John all the disciples of a martyred Lord are martyrs.[1]

4. The meaning of the doom inflicted upon Satan demands our notice. And the angel *laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him.* It is hardly possible to read these words, at the same time remembering St. John's love of contrast or even travesty, and not to see in them a mocking counterpart of the death and burial of Jesus, when the stone was rolled to the door of the sepulchre and sealed. If so, it is not enough to say that by the infliction of this doom the power of Satan was restrained, and his influence lessened. Much more must be implied; and the language can only mean that, in one sense or another, Satan was rendered powerless and harmless, as unable to act his part as though he had been laid in the grave.

5. The use of numbers in the Apocalypse ought to be remembered. These numbers are invariably symbolical; and, if the number a thousand is to be here interpreted literally, it seems in that respect to stand alone. Nor is it a reply to this to say that, though not in the strict sense literal, it may signify a period of *indefinite* length. Such an interpretation would be not less opposed than the former to the genius and spirit of this book. The numbers of the Apocalypse have always a *definite* meaning. They express ideas, but the ideas are distinct. They may belong to a region of thought different

[1] Comp. p. 102.

from that with which arithmetical numbers are concerned, but within that region we cannot change their value without at the same time changing the thought. We are not to imagine that numbers, in the allegorical or spiritual use made of them by the Jews, might be tossed about at their pleasure or shuffled like a pack of cards. They were a language; and the bond between them and the ideas that they involved was quite as close as it is between the words of ordinary speech and the speaker's thoughts. A thousand years cannot mean two, or ten, or twenty, or three hundred and sixty-five thousand years according as we please. If they are a measure of time, the measure must be fixed; and we ought to be able to explain the principle leading us to attach to the number one thousand a value different from that which it naturally possesses.

6. The teaching of Scripture elsewhere upon this subject has to be considered. Upon this point it is unnecessary to say much, for the difference between that teaching and any view commonly taken of the thousand years' reign is acknowledged. It ought to be observed, however, that this difference is not merely negative, as if the rest of the New Testament simply failed to fill in certain details of events more largely described in the Apocalypse, but upon the whole substantially the same. The difference is also positive, and in some respects irreconcilable with what we are taught by the other sacred writers. The New Testament, unless this passage be an exception, always brings the *Parousia* and the general judgment into the closest possible connexion. It nowhere interposes a lengthened period between the resurrection of believers and that of unbelievers. It knows only of one, and that a general, resurrection; and the passages,

such as 1 Cor. xv. 23, 24, and 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17, usually quoted to support another conclusion, fail when correctly interpreted to do so. When our Lord comes again, He at once perfects the happiness of His saints and makes all His enemies His footstool.[1] One text alone may be quoted upon this point. While the "first resurrection" is assigned to a date a thousand or even thousands of years before the end, it is several times repeated in the discourse of Jesus in the sixth chapter of St. John that the resurrection of believers takes place at the "last day."[2]

7. One other consideration may be kept in view. It would appear that about the time of the Advent of our Lord there was a widely extended opinion among the Jews, traces of which are also to be found among the Gentiles, that a golden age of a thousand years' duration might be anticipated in the future as a happy close to all the sins and miseries of the world.[3] Here, it is sometimes urged, is the source of the apocalyptic figure of this chapter, which thus becomes only one of the wild chiliastic expectations of the time. But, even if it be allowed that St. John drew the particular figure employed by him from a general belief of his age, it by no means follows that he accepted the literal interpretation of that belief as the reality and substance of prophetic hope. In many a passage of his book he has undeniably spiritualised hopes of Israel founded on the language of the Old Testament in its outward form. He might easily do the same with what he recognised as a

[1] Matt. xxv. 31-46; Rom. ii. 5, 7; 1 Thess. iv. 17; 2 Thess. i. 7 10.

[2] John vi. 39, 40, 44.

[3] See authorities in Lee (*Speaker's Commentary*) on Rev. xx. 2, and his excursus on that chapter.

belief not less widely spread and not less deeply seated in both the Jewish and Gentile portions of the Church. To use the language of the late Archdeacon Lee, "a world-wide belief such as this naturally supplied St. John with symbols and with language wherein to clothe his revelation of the fortunes of the Church, just as he has employed for the same purpose the details of the theocracy, or the imagery of war, or the phenomena and the convulsions of nature."[1] In all such cases the determination of the point at issue really rests upon our view of the *general* tone of the writing in which the difficulty occurs, and on our perception of what will give the unity and harmony to his words for which every intelligent writer is entitled to expect credit at his reader's hands. This conclusion is in the present instance strengthened by the fact that St. John did not confine himself to the traditional belief he is said to have adopted. So far from doing so, he occupies himself chiefly with a picture of that overthrow of Satan which seems to have been no part of the belief, and the mould of which is taken from entirely different sources.

Putting together the different considerations now adduced, we can have but little difficulty in understanding either the binding of Satan or the reign of the saints for a thousand years. The vision describes no period of blessedness to be enjoyed by the Church at the close of the present dispensation. Alike negatively and positively we have simply an ideal picture of results effected by the Redeemer for His people, when for them He lived, and suffered, and died, and rose again. Thus He bound Satan for them; He cast

[1] *Speaker's Commentary*, u.s.

him into the abyss; He shut him in; He sealed the abyss over him,—so that against *them* he can effect nothing. He is a bruised and conquered foe. He may war against them, afflict them, persecute them, kill them, but their true life is beyond his reach. Already they live a resurrection and ascended life, for it is a life hid with Christ in God, a life in that "heaven" from which the devil has been finally and for ever expelled. They rest upon, they live in, a risen and glorified Redeemer; and, whatever be the age, or country, or circumstances in which their lot is cast, they sit with their Lord in the heavenly places and share His victory. He has been always triumphant, and in His triumph His people even now have part. The glory which the Father gave the Son the Son has given them.[1] They cannot sin, because they are begotten of God.[2] He that was begotten of God keepeth them, and the evil one toucheth them not.[3] This is the reign of a thousand years, and it is the portion of every believer who in any age of the Church shares the life of his risen and exalted Lord.

Thus also we may comprehend what is meant by the loosing of Satan. There is no point in the future at which he is to be loosed. He has been already loosed. Hardly was he completely conquered for the saints before he was loosed for the world. He was loosed as a great adversary who, however he may persecute the children of God, cannot touch their inner life, and who can only "deceive the nations,"—the nations that have despised and rejected Christ. He has never been really absent from the earth. He has gone about continually, "knowing that he

[1] John xvii. 22. [2] 1 John iii. 9. [3] 1 John v. 18.

hath but a short time."[1] But he is unable to hurt those who are kept in the hollow of the Lord's hand. No doubt he tries it. That is the meaning of the description extending from the seventh to the ninth verse of this chapter,—the meaning of the war which Satan carries on against the camp of the saints and the beloved city when the thousand years are finished. In other words, no sooner was Satan, as regards the saints, completely bound than, as regards the world, he was loosed; and from that hour, through all the past history of Christianity, he has been stirring up the world against the Church. He has been summoning the nations that are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war. They war, but they do not conquer, until at last fire comes down out of heaven and devours them. *The devil that deceived them is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

The whole picture of the thousand years is in its main features—in the binding of Satan, in the security and blessedness of the righteous, and in the loosing of Satan for the war—a striking parallel to the scenes in chap. xii. of this book. There Michael and his angels contended with the devil and his angels; and the latter "prevailed not,"[2] but were cast out of heaven into the earth, so that the inhabitants of heaven are for ever safe from them. There the man-child who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, and from the thought of whom it is impossible to separate the

[1] Chap. xii. 12.

[2] Comp. the remarkable parallel in John i. 5: "and the darkness overcame it not."

thought of those who are one with Him, is caught up unto God and unto His throne. Finally, there also the dragon, though unable really to hurt the saints, "the rest of the woman's seed," makes war upon them, but without result. Of this scene the picture which we have been considering is at once a repetition and a fuller development; and, when we call to mind the peculiarities marking the structure of the Apocalypse, we seem in this fact alone to have no slight evidence of the correctness of the interpretation now proposed.[1]

[1] It is not to be denied that difficulties attend the interpretation of the thousand years suggested in the text. The writer would advert in a note to the two which appear to him to be the most formidable.

1. In ver. 3 we read that Satan was cast into the abyss, etc., "that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished." Let it be granted that "the nations" here referred to can hardly be understood in any other sense than that common in the Apocalypse: the heathen, the ungodly, nations or the wicked in general. We then seem to read that there must be a time during which Satan does not "deceive the nations," while the explanation given above has been that he was no sooner subjugated for the righteous than he was let loose to deceive the unrighteous. In his *Lectures on the Revelation of St. John* (p. 224, note) the author was disposed to plead that the words in question may not have been intended to indicate that action on Satan's part was for a time to cease, but rather to bring out and express that aspect of Satan by which he is specially distinguished in the Apocalypse. In deference to the criticism of the Rev. H. W. Reynolds (*Remarks on Dr. Milligan's Interpretation of the Apocalypse*, pp. 9, 27), he would yield this point. Notwithstanding the irregular constructions of the Apocalypse, it is at least precarious; and it is better to leave a difficulty unsolved, especially in a case where difficulties surround every interpretation yet offered, than to propose solutions of the sufficiency of which even the proposer is doubtful. It may be asked, however, without resorting to the conjecture formerly thrown out, whether the words "that he should deceive," even when taken in what is said to be their only true sense, are irreconcilable with the view of the thou-

The three great enemies of the Church have not only been overcome, but judged, and for ever removed

sand years advocated in this commentary. That view is that the subjugation of Satan for a thousand years means his complete subjugation. When, therefore, it is said that he has been so shut up as "to deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished," the meaning may simply be that in the *act of being subjected* he was deprived alike of authority and opportunity to deceive the nations. It lay within the power of the Conqueror to grant or not to grant him fresh liberty to do so. The "strong man" was then bound, and "his goods were spoiled." He was completely subjected to Christ. When, therefore, we are told of the thousand years during which he was to deceive the nations no more, this language is only the continuation of the figure used in the second verse of the chapter; and what the Seer intends to express is, that during the process of his subjection, and until he should be again loosed by Him who had subjected him, he could do nothing. Satan, in short, must be *permitted* to come up out of the abyss either in his own person or by his agents before he can disturb the earth (comp. chap. ix. 2); and it is the purpose of God that he shall not have power to disturb it until, having been really "brought to nought" by Christ (comp. Heb. ii. 14), he shall go forth to his evil work among the nations as one who, whatever may be the increase of his wrath (comp. chap. xii. 12), has yet been overcome by another far mightier than himself.

2. The second difficulty demanding notice is presented by the words of ver. 5, "The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished." Who are these called "the rest of the dead," and in what sense did they "live"? The term "the rest," applied to persons, occurs in the following passages of the Apocalypse in addition to that before us: chaps. ii. 24, ix. 20, xi. 13, xii 17, xix. 21. In every one of these cases it refers to the remaining portion of a class mentioned, but not exhausted; and it cannot be extended to any class beyond them. Here, however, no class has been spoken of except *the righteous*, or rather the "souls" of the righteous, described by various particulars both of their character and their state. "The rest" of the dead must therefore belong to that class, and to it alone. They cannot be the general body of mankind, both good and bad, with the exception of those previously mentioned. Again, what is meant when it is said that the rest of the dead "lived"? The same word had occurred in the immediately preceding verse, and it must now be understood in the same sense. "If," says Dean Alford,

from all possibility of troubling the righteous more. But the great mass of the wicked have not yet been

who has been quoted with great confidence against the present writer (Reynolds, *u.s.*, p. 23), "in such a passage the first resurrection may be understood to mean *spiritual* rising with Christ, while the second means *literal* rising from the grave, then there is an end of all significance in language; and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to anything. If the first resurrection is spiritual, then so is the second, which I suppose none will be hardy enough to maintain" (on Rev. xx. 4-6). Now that is exactly what is here maintained. The "lived" of ver. 4 is spiritual; the "lived" of ver. 5 is also spiritual. The "rest of the dead" then are the Old Testament saints of chap. vi. 9, who, by the completion of the Lord's redeeming work, were brought up to the level of the New Testament Church (comp p. 101). The meaning of chap. xx. 5 may thus be said to be that, the New Testament Church having had *first* bestowed upon it a complete redemption, the same white robes were afterwards given to the Old Testament Church, the succession being again one of thought rather than time. In this way *all* the members of Christ's body are marked out as having been "dead" before they lived, thus identifying them with their Lord in chap. i. 18; the position of the words at the close of ver. 5, "this is the first resurrection," is rendered more natural by their thus following what is wholly a description of the condition of the blessed, instead of having a sentence interposed of an entirely different character; and, finally, to say nothing of the contextual considerations already referred to, the full Johannine force of the word "lived" is preserved.

These answers to the two chief difficulties associated with the interpretation here suggested of the thousand years may not be satisfactory to all; but it is submitted that they go far at least to meet them, and that in themselves they are neither unfair nor strained. Against one thing only must the author of this commentary enter his most decided protest,—the allegation that the interpretation here offered is gained by dispensing with textual criticism (?) and by sacrificing grammar to an idea. If there be one ground more than another upon which it rests, it is upon the strictest principles of historical interpretation. It ought only to be remembered that the idiosyncrasies of an author are as much a part of such interpretation as the literal meaning of his words; and that to that interpretation, if honestly and thoroughly conducted, the most deeply ingrained prejudices will in due time be compelled to submit.

overtaken by a similar fate. The time has now come to show us in vision what awaits them also:—

> And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire (xx. 11-15).

Upon various particulars mentioned in this passage it is unnecessary to say much. The *throne* beheld by the Seer is *great*, at once in contrast with the "thrones" of the millennial reign, and as befitting the majesty of Him who sits upon it. It is also *white*, as emblematic of His purity and holiness. The Judge is God, the Father in the Son, the Son in the Father; and thus the judgment is searching and complete, and is answered by the consciences of those upon whom it is executed. They see that the Judge's eye penetrates into the most secret recesses of their hearts, and that He is One who has been in the same position, has fought the same battle, and has endured the same trials as themselves. Thus His sentence finds an echo in their hearts, and they are speechless.[1] Thus also judgment becomes really judgment, and not merely the infliction of punishment by resistless power.

The effect of the Judge's taking His seat upon His throne was that *from His face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for*

[1] Comp. Matt. xxii. 12.

them. Yet we are not to understand that after their flight there was neither an earth nor a heaven to be found. It is only the old earth and the old heaven that are spoken of; and almost immediately afterwards the Seer exclaims, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away."[1] The change is part of that "restoration of all things" of which St. Peter spoke to the multitude gathered together in Solomon's porch,[2] of which he then added, "Whereof God spake by the mouth of His holy prophets which have been since the world began," and upon which he dwelt more fully in his second Epistle when he said, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up. But, according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."[3] In the Epistle to the Romans, too, "creation" longs, not for destruction, but for something akin to that "liberty of the glory of the children of God" which they shall obtain along with their "adoption, to wit, the redemption of their *body*."[4] In all these passages it is not the translation of God's saints to an immaterial sphere that lies at the bottom of the thought. It is rather the idea of change, of the transfiguration, of the glorification, of this present scene into a state corresponding with that of its redeemed inhabitants, when they shall "not be unclothed, but clothed upon,"[5] and shall dwell in "spiritual *bodies*."[6]

[1] Chap. xxi. 1.
[2] Acts iii. 21.
[3] 2 Pet. iii. 10, 13.
[4] Rom. viii. 21-23.
[5] 2 Cor. v. 4.
[6] Comp. 1 Cor. xv. 44.

To St. John "heaven" is not an abode of bliss in a scene of which we can form no clear conception, but the spiritual atmosphere in which, alike on this side the grave and on the other, the saints live and move. The "dwellers upon earth" are not those who simply tread its firm soil and breathe its atmosphere, but those who are worldly in their spirit and whose views are bounded by the things of time. The kingdom which Christ establishes is the "kingdom of this world" in its cleansed and purified condition rather than one to which we travel by long and unknown paths. As the Seer looks forward to the future there is nothing to show that he thinks of any other residence for man than that which the Son consecrated by His tomb in Joseph's garden and by the glory of the resurrection morning; and even the new Jerusalem comes down out of heaven to be established upon earth.

Many may doubtless think that such a hope is too earthly, too material, to be suited to the spiritual nature of the Christian dispensation. They fear that it has a tendency to withdraw us from Him who is "spirit," and who must be worshipped, if He is to be worshipped acceptably, "in spirit and truth."[1] But any such apprehension is at variance with the fundamental fact of our Christian faith, the incarnation of our Lord, and is little less than the revival of the old Manichean heresy that matter is essentially evil. Two errors have existed, and may exist, in the Church upon this point. We may strip the Gospel of its spiritual element, and may reduce it to a system of outward and material forms, or we may strip it of its material element, and

[1] John iv. 24.

may resolve it into a vague and shadowy mysticism. Both are the errors of extremes, and it would be difficult to say which has wrought most havoc in the Church. If the one was disastrous in the days of the supremacy of Romanism, the other is hardly less disastrous now. To the false and spurious spiritualism which it engenders we owe not a few of the most serious misconceptions of the present time with regard to the person of Christ, the Church, the Sacraments, and the purpose of redemption as a whole.[1]

To return to the main question in connexion with the passage before us. Does it present us with the picture of a general judgment or of a judgment of the wicked alone? There is much in the passage that leads distinctly to the latter conclusion.

1. The whole vision is obviously an enlargement of what we have already met under the seventh Trumpet, when it was said that "the time of the dead to be judged came."[2] In both visions the persons spoken of as "the dead" must be the same; and they are clearly distinguished in the earlier vision from those called "Thy servants the prophets," the season of whose "reward" was come. With this corresponds the fact that in the writings of St. John the words "to judge" and "judgment" are always used, not in a neutral sense, but in one tending to condemnation. Without some qualifying term the Apostle could hardly have applied them to the acquittal of the righteous.

2. The sources whence the "dead" are gathered confirm this conclusion. These are three in number:

[1] In connexion with the point here spoken of, reference may be made to an interesting and instructive paper by Canon Dale Stewart, Rector of Coulsdon, in *The Churchman* for December, 1887.

[2] Chap. xi. 18.

the sea, death, and *Hades.* Looking first at the two last of these, it is plain that "death" cannot in this connexion be the neutral grave, for it is "cast into the lake of fire," where the devil, the beast, and the false prophet are. Similar remarks apply to "Hades," which in chap. vi. 8 is the coadjutor of death, and which in the New Testament always appears as a region of gloom, and punishment, and opposition to the truth: "And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? thou shalt go down unto Hades;" "And I also say unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."[1] If such be the sense in which we are to understand death and Hades, light is thrown upon the manner in which we are to interpret the first of the three sources, —"the sea." This cannot be the ocean, because the number of those to be given up from its depths at the last day is comparatively small; because, as the literal sea, it is in no way suitably associated with death and Hades; and because, when we read in chap. xxi. 1, "And the sea is no more," it is impossible to think that the word is used in any other than a figurative sense. No reason can be imagined why, when the earth is renewed, there should be no more that sea which is one grand instrument of its present greatness and glory. Besides all this, we have hitherto found that in the Apocalypse the "sea" is the emblem of the unruly and troubled nations of the earth, and the source from which the first beast of chap. xiii. had his origin. In the same sense therefore we must understand it here. Like "death" and "Hades," "the sea" spoken

[1] Matt. xi. 23, xvi. 18.

of can give up none but ungodly dead to the judgment of the great day.

3. The "books" mentioned in the passage are clearly books containing the record of evil deeds alone. When it is said that "books" were opened, and that "another book was opened, which is the book of life," the "books" are distinguished from the "book." It harmonizes with this that the book of life is not opened in order to secure deliverance for those whose names are inscribed in it, but only to justify the sentence passed on any who are cast into the lake of fire.

4. The general teaching of St. John ought not to be lost sight of in considering this question. That teaching is that the eternal condition of the righteous is fully secured to them even in this life, and that in their glorified Head they have already passed through all those preparatory stages on their way to everlasting blessedness at the thought of which they might otherwise have trembled. In Him they have lived, and overcome, and died. In Him they have been raised from the dead, and been seated in the heavenly places. All along they have followed the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and everything that befell Him has in principle befallen them. We cannot say, in the Johannine sense of the word, that Christ has been "judged;" and therefore "judgment" cannot be predicated of the members of His Body. To these last "judgment," we have already seen, "was given" at the time when they entered on their millennial reign; and, with the result of this judgment (for that is the true meaning of the original) in their hands, it is impossible to think of them as judged again.

The judgment of these verses is therefore a judgment of the wicked; and, when it is closed, all Christ's

enemies have not only been vanquished, but have been banished from the scene where He is to reign "before His ancients gloriously."[1] The first part of the final triumph has been accomplished.

[1] Isa. xxiv. 23.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE NEW JERUSALEM.

REV. xxi. 1-xxii. 5.

THE first part of the final triumph of the Lamb has been accomplished, but the second has still to be unfolded. We are introduced to it by one of those preparatory or transition passages which have already frequently met us in the Apocalypse, and which connect themselves both with what precedes and with what follows:—

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His peoples, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God: and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more: the first things are passed away. And He that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He saith, Write: for these words are faithful and true. And He said unto me, They are come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son. But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death (xxi 1-8).

These words, like many others that have already met us, throw light upon the principles on which the Apocalypse is composed. They show in the clearest possible manner that down to the very end of the book chronological considerations must be put out of view. Chronology cannot be thought of when we find, on the one hand, allusions to the new Jerusalem which are only amplified and extended in the next vision of the chapter, or when we find, on the other hand, a description of the exclusion from the new Jerusalem of certain classes that have already been consigned to "the second death." By the first-mentioned allusions the passage connects itself with what is yet to come, by the second with what has gone before. For the same reason it is unnecessary to dwell upon the passage at any length. It contains either nothing new, or nothing that will not again meet us in greater fulness of detail. One or two brief remarks alone seem called for.

The Seer beholds *a new heaven and a new earth.* Two words in the New Testament are translated "new," but there is a difference between them. The one contemplates the object spoken of under the aspect of something that has been recently brought into existence, the other under a fresh aspect given to what had previously existed, but been outworn.[1] The latter word is employed here, as it is also employed in the phrases a "new garment," that is, a garment not threadbare, like an old one; "new wine-skins," that is, skins not shrivelled and dried; a "new tomb," that is, not one recently hewn out of the rock, but one which had never been used as the last resting-place of the

[1] Trench, *Synonyms*, second series, p. 39.

dead. The fact, therefore, that the heavens and the earth here spoken of are "new," does not imply that they are now first brought into being. They may be the old heavens and the old earth; but they have a new aspect, a new character, adapted to a new end. Of the sense in which the word "sea" is to be understood we have already spoken.[1] Another expression in the passage deserves notice. In saying that the time is come when *the tabernacle of the Lord is with men, and He shall dwell with them,* it is added, *and they shall be His peoples.* We are familiar with the Scripture use of the word "people" to denote the true Israel of God, and not less with the use of the word "peoples" to denote the nations of the earth alienated from Him. But here the word "peoples" is used instead of "people" for God's children; and the usage can only spring from this: that the Seer has entirely abandoned the idea that Israel according to the flesh can have the word "people" applied to it, and that all believers, to whatever race they belong, occupy the same ground in Christ, and are possessed of the same privileges. The "peoples" are the counterpart of the "many diadems" of chap. xix. 12.

And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he carried me away in the spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal, having a wall great and high, having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. On the east were

[1] Comp. pp. 227, 357.

three gates, and on the north three gates, and on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that spake with me had for a measure a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length thereof is as great as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs: the length and the breadth and the height thereof are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, a hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. And the building of the wall thereof was jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto pure glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the several gates was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God, the Almighty, is the temple thereof, and the Lamb. And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb. And the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory into it. And the gates thereof shall in no wise be shut by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and the honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie: but only they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street thereof. And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits, yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein; and His servants shall do Him service: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever (xxi. 9-xxii. 5).

The vision contained in these verses is shown the Seer by the angel forming the third of the second group

associated with Him who had been described at chap. xix. 11 as the Rider upon the white horse, and who at that time rode forth to His final triumph. The first of this group of three had appeared at chap. xix. 17, and the second at chap. xx. 1. We have now the third; and it is not unimportant to observe this, for it helps to throw light upon the artificial structure of these chapters, while, at the same time, it connects the vision with Christ's victory upon earth rather than with any scene of splendour and glory in a region beyond the place of man's present abode. Thus it contributes something at least to the belief that there where the believer wars he also wears the crown of triumph.

The substance of the vision is a description of the holy city, the new Jerusalem, the true Church of God wholly separated from the false Church, as she comes down from God, out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Her marriage with the Lamb has taken place,—a marriage in which there shall be no unfaithfulness on the one side and no reproaches on the other, but in which, as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, the Lord shall for ever rejoice in His people, and His people in Him. Then follows, to enhance the picture, a detailed account of the true Church under the figure of the city which had been already spoken of in the first vision of the chapter. The treasures of the Seer's imagination and language are exhausted in order that the thought of her beauty and her splendour may be suitably impressed upon our minds. Her *light*—that is, the light which she spreads abroad, for the word used in the original indicates that she is herself the luminary—is like that of the sun, only that it is of crystalline clearness and purity, *as it were a jasper stone*, the light of Him who sat upon

the throne.[1] She is "the light of the world."[2] The city is also surrounded by *a wall great and high.* She is "a strong city." "Salvation has God appointed her for walls and bulwarks."[3] Her walls have *twelve gates*, and *at the gates twelve angels*, those to whom God gives charge over His people, to keep them in all their ways[4]; while, as was the case with the new Jerusalem beheld by the prophet Ezekiel, *names were written on the gates, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel.*[5] These gates are also harmoniously distributed, three on each side of the square which the city forms. The *foundations of the city*, a term under which we are not to think of foundations buried in the earth, but rather of courses of stones going round the city and rising one above another, are also *twelve;* and on them are *twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

The Seer, however, is not satisfied with this general picture of the greatness of the new Jerusalem. Like that in Ezekiel, the city must be measured.[6] When this is done, her proportions are found, in spite of the absence of all verisimilitude, to be those of a perfect cube. As in the Holy of holies of the Tabernacle, the thought of which lies at the bottom of the description, *the length and the breadth and the height thereof are equal. Twelve thousand furlongs*, or fifteen hundred miles, the city stretches along and across the plain, and rises into the sky,—twelve, the number of the people of God, multiplied by thousands, the heavenly number. The wall is also measured—it is difficult to say whether in height or in thickness, but most probably

[1] Chap. iv. 3.
[2] Matt. v. 14.
[3] Ps. xxxi. 21; Isa. xxvi. 1.
[4] Ps. xci. 11.
[5] Comp. Ezek. xlviii. 31.
[6] Comp. Ezek. xl. 2, 3.

the latter—*a hundred and forty and four cubits*, or twelve multiplied by twelve.

The measuring is completed, and next follows an account of the material of which the city was composed. This was gold, the most precious metal, in its purest state, *like unto pure glass*. *Precious stones* formed, rather than ornamented, its twelve foundations. Its gates were of pearl: *each one of the several gates was of one pearl; and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass*. In all these respects it is evident that the city is thought of as ideally perfect, and not according to the realities or possibilities of things.

Nor is this all. The glory of the city is still further illustrated by figures bearing more immediately upon its spiritual rather than its material aspect. The outward helps needed by men in leading the life of God in their present state of imperfection are dispensed with. There is *no temple therein: for the Lord, God, the Almighty, is the temple thereof, and the Lamb. The city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God lightens* it by day, *and the lamp thereof* by night *is the Lamb*. There is in it no sin, and every positive element of happiness is provided in abundance for the blest inhabitants. *A river of water of life, bright as crystal*, flows there; *and on this side of the river and on that side is the tree of life*, not bearing fruit only once a year, but *every month*, not yielding one only, but *twelve manner of fruits*, so that all tastes may be gratified, having nothing about it useless or liable to decay. The very *leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations*, and it is evidently implied that they are always green. Finally, *there shall be no curse any more. The throne of God and of the Lamb is therein. His servants do Him servic*

They see His face. His name is in their foreheads. They are priests unto God in the service of the heavenly sanctuary. *They reign for ever and ever.*

One important question still remains: What aspect of the Church does the holy city Jerusalem, thus come down out of heaven from God, represent? Is it the Church as she shall be after the Judgment, when her three great enemies, together with all who have listened to them, have been for ever cast out? Or have we before us an ideal representation of the true Church of Christ as she exists now, and before a final separation has been made between the righteous and the wicked? Unquestionably the first aspect of the passage leads to the former view; and, if there be anything like a chronological statement of events in the Apocalypse, no other may be possible. But we have already seen that the thought of chronology must be banished from this book. The Apocalypse contains simply a series of visions intended to exhibit, with all the force of that inspiration under which the Seer wrote, certain great truths connected with the revelation in humanity of the Eternal Son. It is intended, too, to exhibit these in their ideal, and not merely in their historical, form. They are indeed to appear in history; but, inasmuch as they do not appear there in their ultimate and completed form, we are taken beyond the limited field of historical manifestation. We see them in their real and essential nature, and as they *are*, in themselves, whether we think of evil on the one hand, or of good on the other. In this treatment of them, however, chronology disappears. Such being the case, we are prepared to ask whether the vision of the new Jerusalem belongs to the end, or whether it expresses what, under the Christian dispensation, is always ideally true.

1. It must be borne in mind that the new Jerusalem, though described as a city, is really a figure, not of a place, but of a people. It is not the final home of the redeemed. It is the redeemed themselves. It is "the bride, the wife of the Lamb."[1] Whatever is said of it is said of the true followers of Jesus; and the great question, therefore, that has to be considered is, whether St. John's description is applicable to them in their present Christian condition, or whether it is suitable to them only when they have entered upon their state of glorification beyond the grave.

2. The vision is really an echo of Old Testament prophecy. We have already seen this in many particulars, and the correspondence might easily have been traced in many more. "It is all," says Isaac Williams, as he begins his comment upon the particular points of the description—"It is all from Ezekiel: 'The hand of the Lord was upon me, and brought me in the visions of God, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city;'[2] 'And the glory of the Lord came into the house by the gate toward the east;'[3] The Lord entered by the eastern gate; therefore shall it be shut, and opened for none but for the Prince.[4] Such was the coming of Christ's glory from the east into His Church, as so often alluded to before."[5] Other prophets, no doubt, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto us, who testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow, are to be added to Ezekiel, but, whoever they were, it is undeniable that their highest and most glowing representations of that future

[1] Chap. xxi. 9.
[2] Ezek. xl. 1, 2.
[3] Ezek. xliii. 4
[4] Ezek. xliv. 1-3.
[5] *The Apocalypse*, p. 438.

for which they longed, and the advent of which they were commissioned to proclaim, are reproduced in St. John's description of the new Jerusalem. Of what was it, then, that they spoke? Surely it was of the times of the Messiah upon earth, of that kingdom of God which He was to establish with the beginning, and not with the end, of the Christian dispensation. That they may have looked forward to the world beyond the grave is possible; but any distinction between the first and second coming of our Lord had not yet risen upon their minds. In the simple coming of the Hope of Israel into the world they beheld the accomplishment of every aspiration and longing of the heart of man. And they were right. The distinction which experience taught the New Testament writers to draw was not so much between a first and a second coming of the King as between a kingdom then *hidden*, but afterwards *to be manifested* in all its glory.

3. This ideal view of the Messianic age is also constantly brought before us in the New Testament. The character, the privileges, and the blessings of those who are partakers of the spirit of that time are always presented to us as irradiated with a heavenly and perfect glory. St. Paul addresses the various churches to which he wrote as, notwithstanding all their imperfections, "beloved of God," "sanctified in Christ Jesus," "saints and faithful brethren in Christ."[1] Christ is "in them," and they are "in Christ."[2] "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself up for it; that He might present the Church to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any

[1] Rom. i. 7; 1 Cor. i. 2; Col. i. 2.
[2] Col. i. 27; 1 Cor. i. 30; Phil. iii. 9.

such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish,"[1]—the description evidently applying to the present world, where also the Church is seated, not in earthly, but in "the heavenly, places" with her Lord.[2] Our "citizenship" is declared to be "in heaven;"[3] and we are even now "come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to innumerable hosts of angels, and to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, who are enrolled in heaven."[4] Our Lord Himself and St. John, following in His steps, are even more specific as to the present kingdom and the present glory. "In that day," says Jesus to His disciples, "ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you,"[5] and again, "And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as We are one;"[6] while it is unnecessary to quote the passages meeting us everywhere in the writings of the beloved disciple in which he speaks of eternal life, and that, too, in the full greatness both of its privileges and of its results, as a possession enjoyed by the believer in this present world. The whole witness of the New Testament, in short, is to an ideal, to a perfect, kingdom of God even now established among men, in which sin is conquered, temptation overcome, strength substituted for weakness, death so deprived of its sting that it is no more death, and the Christian, though for a little put to grief in manifold temptations, made "to rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and glorified."[7] From all this the representation of the new Jerusalem in

[1] Eph. v. 25-27.
[2] Eph. i. 3.
[3] Phil. iii. 20.
[4] Heb. xii. 22, 23.
[5] John xiv. 20.
[6] John xvii. 22.
[7] 1 Pet. i. 8.

the Apocalypse differs in no essential respect. It enters more into particulars. It illustrates the general thought by a greater variety of detail. But it contains nothing which is not found in principle in the other sacred writers, and which is not connected by them with the heavenly aspect of the Christian's pilgrimage to his eternal home.

4. There are distinct indications in the apocalyptic vision which leave no interpretation possible except one,—that the new Jerusalem has come, that it has been in the midst of us for more than eighteen hundred years, that it is now in the midst of us, and that it shall continue to be so wherever its King has those who love and serve Him, walk in His light, and share His peace and joy.

(1) Let us look at chap. xx. 9, where we read of "the camp of the saints and the beloved city." That city is none other than the new Jerusalem, about to be described in the following chapter. It is Jerusalem after the elements of the harlot character have been wholly expelled, and the call of chap. xviii. 4 has been heard and obeyed, "Come forth, My people, out of her." She is inhabited now by none but "saints," who, though they have still to war with the world, are themselves the "called, and chosen, and faithful." But this "beloved city" is spoken of as in the world, and as the object of attack by Satan and his hosts before the Judgment.[1]

(2) Let us look at chap. xxi. 24 and xxii. 2: "And the nations shall walk by the light thereof; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory into it;" 'And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of

[1] Comp. Foxley, *Hulsean Lectures*, Lect. I.

the nations." Who are these "nations" and these "kings of the earth"? The constant use of the same expressions in other parts of this book, where there can be no doubt as to their meaning, compels us to understand them of nations and kings beyond the pale of the covenant. But if so, the difficulty of realizing the situation at a point of time beyond the Judgment appears to be insuperable, and may be well illustrated by the effort of Hengstenberg to overcome it. "Nations," says that commentator, "in the usage of the Revelation, are not nations generally, but always *heathen* nations in their natural or christianized state; compare at chap. xx. 3. That we are to think here only of *converted* heathen is as clear as day. No room for conversion can be found on the further side of chap. xx. 15, for every one who had not been found written in the book of life has already been cast into the lake of fire."[1] But the words "or christianized" in this comment have no countenance from any other passage in the Apocalypse, and in Hengstenberg's note at chap. xx. 3 we are referred to nothing but the texts before us. On every other occasion, too, where the word "nations" meets us, it means unconverted, not converted, nations; and here it can mean nothing else. Were the nations spoken of converted, they would be a part of that new Jerusalem which is not the residence of God's people, but His people themselves. They would be the light, and not such as walk "by the light" of others. They would be the healed, and not those who stand in need of "healing." These "nations" must be the unconverted, these "kings of the earth" such as have not yet acknow-

[1] Commentary in *Clark's Foreign Theological Library, in loc.*

ledged Jesus to be their King; and nothing of this can be found beyond chap. xx. 15.

(3) Let us look at chap. xxi. 27, where we read, "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that doeth an abomination and a lie." These words distinctly intimate that the time for final separation had not yet come. Persons of the wicked character described must be supposed to be alive upon the earth after the new Jerusalem has appeared.

5. Another consideration on the point under discussion may be noticed, which will have weight with those who admit the existence of that principle of structure in St. John's writings upon which it rests. Alike in the Gospel and in the Apocalypse the Apostle is marked by a tendency to return at the close of a section to what he had said at the beginning, and to shut up, as it were, between the two statements all he had to say. So here. In chap. i. 3 he introduces his Apocalypse with the words, "For the time is at hand." In chap. xxii. 10, immediately after closing it, he returns to the thought, "Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand;" that is, the whole intervening revelation is enclosed between these two statements. All of it precedes the "time" spoken of. The new Jerusalem comes before the end.

In the new Jerusalem, therefore, we have essentially a picture, not of the future, but of the present; of the ideal condition of Christ's true people, of His "little flock" on earth, in every age. The picture may not yet be realized in fulness; but every blessing lined in upon its canvas is in principle the believer's now, and will be more and more his in actual experience as he opens his eyes to see and his heart to receive. We

have been wrong in transferring the picture of the new Jerusalem to the future alone. It belongs also to the past and to the present. It is the heritage of the children of God at the very time when they are struggling with the world; and the thought of it ought to stimulate them to exertion and to console them under suffering.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE EPILOGUE.

Rev. xxii. 6–21.

THE visions of the Seer have closed, and closed with a picture of the final and complete triumph of the Church over all her enemies. No more glorious representation of what her Lord has done for her could be set before us than that contained in the description of the new Jerusalem. Nothing further can be said when we know that in the garden of Paradise Restored into which she is introduced, in the Holy of holies of the Divine Tabernacle planted in the world, she shall eat of the fruit of the tree of life, drink of the water of life, and reign for ever and ever. Surely as these visions passed before the eye of St. John in the lonely isle of Patmos he would be gladdened with the light of heaven, and would need no more to strengthen him in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. Was it not too much? The Epilogue of the book assures us that it was not; and that, although the natural eye of man had not seen, nor his ear heard, nor his heart conceived the things that had been spoken of, they had been revealed by the Spirit of God Himself, not one word of whose promises would fail.

And he said unto me, These words are faithful and true: and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show unto His servants the things which must shortly come to pass. And, behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book.

And I John am he that heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee, and with thy brethren the prophets, and with them which keep the words of this book: worship God (xxii. 6-9).

Attention has been already called in this commentary both to that characteristic of St. John's style as a writer which leads him, at a longer or a shorter interval, to the point from which he started, and to the fact that light is thus frequently thrown on the interpretation of what he says.[1] Every illustration of such a point is therefore not only interesting, but important; and in the words before us it is illustrated with more than ordinary clearness.

The person introduced with the words *He said unto me* is not indeed named, but there can be little doubt that he is the angel spoken of in the Prologue as sent to "signify" the revelation that was to follow.[2]

Again, when the Seer is overwhelmed with what he has seen, and may be said to have almost feared that it was too wonderful for belief, the angel assures him that it was all *faithful and true*. A similar declaration had been made at chap. xix. 9 by the voice which there "came forth from the throne,"[3] and likewise at chap. xxi. 5 by Him "that sitteth on the throne." The angel therefore who now speaks, like the angel of the Prologue, has the authority of this Divine Being for what he says. It is true that in the following words,

[1] Comp. p. 373. [2] Chap. i. 1. [3] Chap. xix. 5.

which seem to come from the same speaker, the angel must thus be understood to refer to himself in the third person, and not, as we might have expected, in the first,—*The Lord sent His angel*, not The Lord sent me. But, to say nothing of the fact that such a method of address is met with in the prophetic style of the Old Testament, it appears to be characteristic of St. John in other passages of his writings. More particularly we mark it in the narrative in the fourth Gospel of the death of Jesus on the Cross: "And he that hath seen hath borne witness, and his witness is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye may believe."[1]

Again, we read here that *the Lord sent His angel to show unto His servants the things which must shortly come to pass;* and the statement is the same as that of chap. i. 1.

The next words, *And, behold, I come quickly*, are probably words of our Lord Himself; but the blessing upon him *that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book* again leads the Seer back to the Prologue, where a similar blessing is pronounced.[2]

Again, the remembrance of the Prologue is in the Apostle's mind when, naming himself, he proceeds, *I John am he that heard and saw these things.* In precisely the same manner, after the introductory verses of the Prologue, he had named himself as the writer of the book: "John to the seven Churches;" "I John, your brother."[3] Then he was about to write; now that he has written, he is the same John whom the

[1] John xix. 35. Wider questions than can be here discussed would be opened up by an inquiry how far the same method of explanation may be applied to John xvii. 3.

[2] Chap. i. 3. [3] Chap. i. 4, 9.

Church knew and honoured, and whose consciousness of everything that had passed was undimmed and perfect. This going back upon the Prologue is also sufficient to prove, if proof be thought necessary, that the words "these things" are designed to include, not merely the vision of the new Jerusalem, but all the visions of the book.

That the Seer should have fallen down to *worship before the feet of the angel which showed him these things* has often caused surprise. He had already done so on a previous occasion,[1] and had been reproved in words almost exactly similar to those in which he is now addressed: *See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee, and with thy brethren the prophets, and with them which keep the words of this book: worship God.* How could he so soon forget the warning? We need not wonder. The thought of the one vision preceding his former mistake might easily be swallowed up by the thought of the whole revelation of which it was a part; and, as the splendour of all that he had witnessed passed once more before his view, he might imagine that the angel by whom it was communicated must be worthy of his worship. His mistake was corrected as before.

The prophecy is now in the Seer's hands, ideally, though not actually, written. He may easily speak of it, therefore, as written, and may relate the instructions which he received regarding it. He does this, and again it will be seen how closely he follows the lines of his Prologue:—

And he saith unto me, Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unrighteous, let him

[1] Chap. xix. 10.

do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still. Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to render to each man according as his work is. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city. Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie (xxii. 10-15).

To the prophet Daniel it had been said, "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end."[1] The hour had not yet come for the full manifestation of that momentous future upon which he had been commissioned to dwell. The situation of St. John was wholly different, and the hour for winding up the history of this dispensation was about to strike. It was not a time then for sealing up, but for breaking seals, a time for prophecy, for the loudest, clearest, and most urgent proclamation of the truth. "Behold, I come quickly," had been a moment before the voice of the great Judge. Let the bride for whom He is to come be ready; and, that she may the more promptly be so, let her hear with earnest and immediate attention *the words of the prophecy of this book.*

It is by no means easy to say whether the following words, *He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still,* are to be considered as coming from the Apostle or from the angel who has been speaking to him. This difficulty is the same as that experienced in the fourth Gospel

[1] Dan. xii. 4; comp. viii. 26.

at such passages as chap. iii. 16 and 31, where it is nearly impossible to tell the point at which in the one case the words of Jesus, at which in the other the words of the Baptist, end. It would appear as if St. John so sank himself in the person with whom he was occupied at the time that he often gave utterance to thoughts without being able to distinguish between the other's and his own. In the present instance it matters little to whom we directly refer the words, whether to St. John, or to the angel, or to Him who speaks by the angel. In any case they contain a striking and solemn view of the relation between the righteous Judge and His creatures, when that relation is looked at in its ultimate, in its final, form. One thing is clear: that the first two clauses cannot be regarded as a summons to the wicked telling them before the Judgment to go on in their wickedness even while the period of their probation lasts. Nor can the second two clauses be regarded as an assurance to the good that there is a point in the actual experience of life at which their perseverance in goodness is secured. The words can only be understood in the light of that idealism which is so characteristic alike of the Apocalypse and of the fourth Gospel. In both books the world of mankind is presented to us in exactly the same light. Men are divided into two great classes: those who are prepared to receive the truth and those who are obstinately opposed to it; and these classes are spoken of as if they had been formed, not merely after, but before, the work of Christ had tried and proved them. Not indeed that the salvation to be found in Jesus was not designed to be universal, that there was even one member of the human family doomed by eternal and irresistible decree

to everlasting death, nor, again, that men are considered as so essentially identified with the two classes to which they respectively belong that they incur no moral responsibility in accepting or rejecting the Redeemer of the world. In that respect St. John occupied the same ground as his fellow-Apostles. Not less than they would he have declared that God willed all men to be saved; and not less than they would he have told them that, if they were not saved, it was because they "loved the darkness rather than the light."[1] Yet, notwithstanding this practical mode in which he would have dealt with men, such is his idealism, such his mode of looking at things in their ultimate, eternal, unchanging aspect, that he constantly presents the two classes as if they were divided from each other by a permanent wall of separation, and as if the work of Christ consisted not so much in bringing the one class over to the other as in making manifest the existing tendencies of each. The light of the one brightens, the darkness of the other deepens, as we proceed; but the light does not become darkness, and the darkness does not become light.[2]

Hence, accordingly, the conversion of Israel or of the heathen finds no place in the Apocalypse. The texts supposed to offer such a prospect will not bear the interpretation put upon them. It does not indeed follow that, according to the teaching of this book, neither Israel nor the heathen will be converted. St. John only sees the end in the beginning, and deals, not with the everyday practical, but with the ideal and everlasting, issues of God's kingdom. Hence, in inter-

[1] Comp. John iii. 19.

[2] See a fuller treatment of this important point by the author in his *Lectures on the Revelation of St. John*, p. 286, etc.

preting the words before us, we must be careful to put into them the exact shade of meaning which the whole spirit and tone of the Apostle's writings prove to have been in his mind when they were written. The clauses "He that is unrighteous" and "He that is filthy" are to be understood as "He that has loved and chosen unrighteousness and filthiness:" the clauses "Let him do unrighteousness still" and "Let him be made filthy still" as "Let him sink deeper into the unrighteousness and filthiness which he has loved and chosen." A principle freely selected by himself is supposed to be in the breast of each, and that principle does not remain fixed and stationary. No principle does. It unfolds or develops itself according to its own nature, rising to greater heights of good if it be good, sinking to greater depths of evil if it be evil. Hence also we are not to imagine that the words under consideration are applicable only to the end, or are the record only of a final judgment. They are applicable to the Church and to the world throughout the whole course of their respective histories, and it is at this moment as true as it will ever be that, in so far as the heart and will of a man are really turned to evil or to good, the allegiance he has chosen has the tendency of continued progress towards the triumph of the one or of the other.

In connexion with thoughts like these, we see the peculiar propriety of that declaration as to Himself and His purposes next made by the Redeemer: *Behold, I come quickly.* He comes to wind up the history of the present dispensation. *And My reward is with Me, to render to each man according as his work is.* He comes to bestow "reward"[1] upon His own; and there

[1] Comp. chap. xi. 18.

is no mention of judgment, because for those who are to be rewarded judgment is past and gone. *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end,* the words again taking us back to the language of the Prologue,[1] upon which follows a blessing for such as *wash their robes,* for those otherwise described in the Prologue as "loosed from their sins in His blood,"[2] and in chap. vii. 14 as having "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." These *have the right to come to the tree of life, and they enter in by the gates into the city.* A different order might have been expected, for the tree of life grows within the city, and it is the happy inhabitants of the city who eat its fruits. But this is the blessed paradox of faith. It is difficult to say which privilege enjoyed by the believer comes first, and which comes second. Rather may all that he enjoys be looked on as given at once, for the great gift to him is Christ Himself, and in Him everything is included. He is the gate of the city, and as such the way to the tree of life; He is the tree of life, and they who partake of Him have a right to enter into the city and dwell there. Why ask, Which comes first? At one moment we may think that it is one blessing, at another that it is another. The true description of our state is that we are "in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."[3]

To enhance our estimate of the happiness of those who are within the city, there comes next a description of those who are without. They are first denoted

[1] Chap. i. 8. [2] Chap. i. 5. [3] 1 Cor. i. 30.

by the general term *the dogs*, that animal, as we learn from many passages of Scripture, being to the Jew the emblem of all that was wild, unregulated, unclean, and offensive.[1] Then the general term is subdivided into various classes; and all of them are *without*, not put out. They were put out when judgment fell upon them. Now they *are* without; and the door once open to them "is shut."[2]

The last words follow:—

I Jesus have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things for the Churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star.

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come. He that will, let him take the water of life freely. I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book. He which testifieth these things saith, Yea: I come quickly. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints. Amen (xxii. 16-21).

Once more in these words it will be seen that we return to the Prologue, in the opening words of which we read, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him, to show unto His servants; . . . and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John."[3] The glorified Lord now takes up the same words Himself; and, connecting by the name "Jesus" all that He was on earth with all that belongs to His condition in heaven, He declares of the whole revelation contained in the visions of this book that the

[1] Comp. Ps. xxii. 16, 20; Matt. vii. 6; Phil. iii. 2.
[2] Comp. Matt. xxv. 10.
[3] Chap. i. 1.

angel through whom it was communicated had been sent by Him. He Himself had given it—He, even Jesus,—Jesus the Saviour of His people from their sins, the Captain of their salvation, the Joshua who leads them out of the "wilderness" of this world, across the valley of the shadow of death, into that Promised Land which Canaan, with its milk and honey, its vines and olive trees, its rest after long wanderings, and its peace after hard warfare, only faintly pictured to their view. Well is He able to do this, for in Him earth meets heaven, and "the angels of God ascend and descend upon the Son of man."[1]

First, He is *the root and the offspring of David*, not the root out of which David springs, as if He would say that He is David's Lord as well as David's Son,[2] but the "shoot that comes out of the stock of Jesse and the branch out of his roots that bears fruit."[3] He is the "Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh,"[4] the substance of ancient prophecy, the long-promised and looked-for King. Secondly, He is *the bright, the morning star*, the star which shines in its greatest brilliancy when the darkness is about to disappear, and that day is about to break of which "the Sun of righteousness, with healing in His wings," shall be the everlasting light,[5] Himself "our Star, our Sun." Thus He is connected on the one side with earth, on the other with heaven, "Immanuel, God with us,"[6] touched with a feeling of our infirmities, mighty to save. "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who

[1] John i. 51. [2] Matt. xxii. 45. [3] Isa. xi. 1. [4] Rom. i. 3. [5] Mal. iv. 2. [6] Matt. i. 23.

is against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who shall say anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that shall condemn? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Even as it is written,

For Thy sake we are killed all the day long;
We were accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."[1]

The Saviour had declared, "Behold, I come quickly," had spoken of the "reward" which He would bring with Him, and had used various images to set forth the happiness and joy which should be the everlasting portion of those for whom He came. These declarations could not fail to awaken in the breast of the Church a longing for His coming, and this longing now finds expression.

The Spirit and the bride say, Come. We are not to think of two separate voices: the voice of the Spirit and the voice of the bride. It is a characteristic of St. John's style that where there is combined action,

[1] Rom. viii. 31-39.

action, having both an inward and invisible and an outward and visible side, he often separates the two agencies by which it is produced. Many illustrations of this may be found in his mention of the actions of the Father and the Son, but it will be enough to refer to one more strictly parallel to that met with here. In chap. xv. of the fourth Gospel we find Jesus saying to His disciples, "But when the Advocate is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall bear witness of Me; and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning."[1] In these words we have not two works of witnessing, the first that of the Advocate, the second that of the disciples. We have only one,—outwardly that of the disciples, inwardly that of the Advocate. In like manner now. The Spirit and the bride do not utter separate calls. The Spirit calls in the bride; the bride calls in the Spirit. The cry "Come" is therefore that of the spiritually enlightened Church as she answers the voice of her Lord and King. Her voice is the echo of His. He says, "I come;" she answers, "Come." St. John then adds the next clause himself: *And let him that heareth say, Come;* that is, let him that heareth with the hearing of faith; let him who has made his own the glorious prospects opened up in the visions of this book as to the Lord's Second Coming add his individual cry to the cry of the universal Church. To this the Saviour replies, *And he that is athirst, let him come. He that will, let him take the water of life freely.* The words appear to be addressed, not to the world, but to the Church. He

[1] John xv. 26, 27.

that is "athirst" has already drunk of the living water, but he thirsts for deeper draughts from that river the streams whereof make glad the city of God. To partake more and more largely of these is the believer's longing; and fulness of blessing is within his reach. Let him never say, "It is enough." Let him drink and drink again; let him drink "freely," until the water that Christ shall give him becomes in him "a fountain of springing water unto eternal life."[1] The statements and replies contained in these words are those of the glorified Lord, of the Church speaking in the Spirit, and of the individual believer, as they hold converse with one another in that moment of highest rapture when evil has been extinguished, when the struggle is over, when the victory has been gained, and when the Lord of the Church is at the door. He in them and they in Him, what can they do but speak to and answer one another in strains expressive of mutual longing and affection and joy?

Once more the Seer—for it seems to be he that speaks—turns to the book which he has written.

In the Prologue he had said, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein."[2] In the same spirit he now denounces a woe upon him who adds to it: *God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in the book;* nor less upon him who takes from it: *for God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book.* The book has come from Him who is the faithful and true Witness of God, and it has been written in obedience to His command and under the guidance

[1] John iv. 14. [2] Chap. i. 3.

of His Spirit. St. John himself is nothing; Christ is all: and St. John knows that the words of his great Master are fulfilled, "He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me."[1] Therefore may he speak with all authority, for it is not he that speaks, but the Holy Spirit.[2]

Yet once again, before the parting salutation, Christ and the Church interchange their thoughts. The former speaks first: *He which testifieth these things saith, Yea, I come quickly.* It is the sum and substance of His message to His suffering people, for they can desire or need no more. The "I" is the Lord Himself as He is in glory, not in the feebleness of the flesh, not amidst the sins and sorrows of the world, not with the cup of trembling and astonishment in His hand, but in the unlimited fulness of His Divine power, clothed with the light of His heavenly abode, and anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. Especially is the Church told that this revelation is all she needs, because throughout the book she is supposed to be in the midst of trials. To the troubled heart the Apocalypse is given; and by such a heart is it best understood.

Jesus has spoken; and the Church replies, *Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.* Amen to all that the Lord has promised; Amen to the thought of sin and sorrow banished, of wounded hearts healed, of tears of affliction wiped away, of the sting taken from death and victory from the grave, of darkness dissipated for ever, of the light of the eternal day. Surely it cannot come too soon. "Why is His chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of His chariots?"[3] "Yea, I come quickly. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."

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[1] Matt. x. 40. [2] Comp. Mark xiii. 11. [3] Judges v. 28.

The salutation of the writer to his readers alone remains. It ought to be read differently from its form in the authorised English version, not "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all," but *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints*. For the saints the book had been written; to them it had been spoken: they alone can keep it. Let no man who is not in Christ imagine that the Revelation of St. John is addressed to him. Let no man imagine that, if he has not found Christ already, he will find Him here. The book will rather perplex and puzzle, more probably offend, him. Only in that union with Christ which brings with it the hatred of sin and the love of holiness, which teaches us that we are "orphans"[1] in a present world, which makes us wait for the manifestation of the kingdom of God as they that wait for the morning, can we enter into the spirit of the Apocalypse, listen to its threatenings without thinking them too severe, or so embrace its promises that they shall heighten rather than lower the tone of our spiritual life. Here, if anywhere, faith and love are the key to knowledge, not knowledge the key to faith and love. It is in the very spirit of the book, therefore, not in a spirit hard, or narrow, or unsympathetic, that it closes with the words, "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints."

We have reached the end of this singular, but at the same time most instructive, book of the New Testament. That the principles upon which it has been interpreted should be generally accepted were too much to hope for. Their acceptance, where they are received,

[1] John xiv. 18, R.V. (margin).

must depend mainly upon the consideration that while, as scientific principles, they are thoroughly capable of defence, they give unity to the book and a meaning worthy of that Divine Spirit by whose influence upon the soul of the Apostle it was produced. On no other principles of interpretation does it seem possible to effect this; and the writer of these pages at least is compelled to think that, if they are rejected, there is only one conclusion possible,—that the Apocalypse, however interesting as a literary memorial of the early Christian age, must be regarded as a merely human production, and not entitled to a place in the canon of Scripture. Such a place, however, must in the present state of the argument be vindicated for it; and as an inspired book it has accordingly been treated here. What the reader, therefore, has to consider is whether, though some difficulties may not be completely overcome, he can accept in the main the principles upon which, in endeavouring to explain the book, the writer has proceeded. These principles the reader, whoever he be, undoubtedly applies to innumerable passages of Scripture. In so applying them to the prophets of the Old Testament, he follows the example of our Lord and His Apostles; and much of the New Testament itself equally demands their application. There is nothing new in them. All commentators in part apply them. They have only been followed out now with more consistency and uniformity than usual. Archdeacon Farrar has said that one of the two questions in New Testament criticism which have acquired new aspects during the last few years is, What is the key to the interpretation of the Apocalypse?[1] The question is certainly one

[1] *Expositor*, July, 1888, p. 58.

urgently demanding the Church's answer, and one which will without doubt be answered in due time, either in the present or some other form. May the Spirit of God guide the Church and her students, and that speedily, into all the truth.